

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

Brian Weeks, assistant professor of communication and media, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of communication and media, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2014	The Ohio State University
M.A.	2010	University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
B.A.	2005	University of Wisconsin-Madison

Professional Record:

2015 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Communication and Media, University of Michigan
2015 – present	Faculty Associate, Center for Political Studies, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
2014 – 2015	Universitätsassistent, Post-doctoral Researcher (~ equivalent to U.S. Assistant Professor), Department of Communication, University of Vienna

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Weeks is an excellent and organized teacher who is committed to continuous improvement of pedagogical techniques. His courses cover controversial topics such as how news organizations choose to cover events, how fake news and misinformation spread, and how these choices influence the public; Professor Weeks simultaneously strives to be as inclusive as possible in the classroom. He has designed two new undergraduate courses and revised an existing lecture course. To date, Professor Weeks has served as the Ph.D. advisor for two students and been a member of the dissertation committees of nine students. He is a generous mentor and is committed to student success. Both of his advisees have been successful in the job market.

Research: Professor Weeks is a nationally respected scholar of political communication, whose research centers on the role of social and digital media in politics. His work addresses a set of substantial questions concerning news exposure, information processing and sharing, and dimensions of political engagement in the era of social and digital media. He is a highly productive scholar, whose work is based on multidisciplinary traditions, including communication, political science, and psychology. Notably, Professor Weeks has produced an influential body of work that investigates the topic of political misinformation, including how social media promotes misinformation, why and how false information is believed, how polarized political climate and partisan emotions exacerbate the problem of misinformation, and how all of these affect democratic outcomes. One of the major strengths in Professor Weeks' dossier is that his research addresses topics that are not only theoretically and normatively substantive, but also of timely significance in contemporary politics. His work addresses core questions in political communication, like the role of communication media in participatory democracy and informed citizenry. In addition, his work investigates the role of increasingly salient facets in contemporary politics, such as fake news and political misinformation, partisan emotions, and polarized electorate.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Weeks, B.E., and D.S Lane. "The ecology of incidental exposure to news in digital media environments." *Journalism* 21, no. 8 (2020): 1119-1135.

Weeks, B.E., A. Ardévol-Abreu, and H. Gil de Zúñiga. "Online influence? Social media use, opinion leadership, and political persuasion." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 29, no. 2 (2017): 214-239.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., B.E. Weeks, and A. Ardévol-Abreu. "Effects of the 'news finds me' perception in communication: Social media use implications for news seeking and learning about politics." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 22, no. 4 (2017): 105-123.

"Emotions, partisanship, and misperceptions. How anger and anxiety moderate the effect of partisan bias on susceptibility to political misinformation." *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 4 (2015): 699-719.

Service: Professor Weeks' service record is unusually strong for a junior faculty member. He has served on four departmental committees, including undergraduate curriculum, graduate program, and graduate admissions committees. Professor Weeks has also participated in both LSA and UM service activities and has a solid record of disciplinary service, including journal editorial boards.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): "Several qualities characterize Weeks' research. He asks questions that are of theoretical, applied, and normative importance. There is ample evidence of how our field has received Weeks' scholarship. He has published in some of the best journals in our field...He has received ten awards from major associations such as the *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication*, the *National Communication Association*, and the *American Political Science Association*. He has over 1600 citations (Google Scholar) to his work."

Reviewer (B): "And in his coauthored 2016 *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* article, Professor Weeks uses a panel survey to show that people process news on biased news websites based on their partisan motives. This is extremely important because the evidence reveals that believing misinformation is less about being 'tricked' as some may argue. Instead, Professor Weeks finds that partisan strategy is at play in these perceptions of what information is 'true' and what may be 'fake news.' These findings have profound implications in today's politics where the concept of fake news in popular rhetoric seems more synonymous with 'information I do not like' more than any genuine definition of misinformation."

Reviewer (C): "Especially noteworthy is the Denis McQuail Award Professor Weeks and his co-authors received in 2018 from the Amsterdam School of Communication Research, an honor bestowed by an international panel of judges for research that significantly advances communication theory. My perception of Professor Weeks' scholarly reputation is that he is well respected and is viewed as one of the 'go-to' [junior] experts on the role of social media and emotion in how people acquire, believe and share political information and misinformation."

Reviewer (D): "Indeed, one can see the strength of his intellectual engagement in the set of published work in his packet. First, let me note that each article was extremely well done—clearly written, carefully thought through, well argued, and accessible. Building on his empirical work highlighting the importance of incidental news exposure (Weeks et al., 2017), his recent work on the

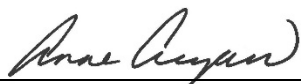
ecological model of incidental news exposure (Weeks & Lane, 2020) stood out for its thorough, systematic consideration of a type of media exposure that is rarely considered in the canon of media effects research. As well, his role as a leader and an agenda-setter in the ‘hot’ area of misinformation is evident in his discussion of the future of misinformation research (Weeks & de Zuniga, 2019).”

Reviewer (E): “Given the overall caliber of Professor Weeks’ scholarship—theoretically grounded, methodologically solid, and substantively significant—it would be difficult to identify a particular article as outstanding...However, I would be remiss if I did not point to two recent articles: Weeks and Lane’s (*Journalism*, 2020) ‘The ecology of incidental exposure to news in digital media environments’ and Weeks and Gil de Zúñiga’s (*American Behavioral Scientist*, 2019) ‘What’s next? Six observations of the future of political misinformation research.’ These two articles are especially impressive because so few scholars, especially junior scholars, take on the herculean task of crafting theories/models, much less attempt to explicitly spell out calls for research.”

Reviewer (F): “Brian has made a major impact on research concerning the role of political information and misinformation, both how people gain knowledge and form political beliefs and how people come to believe false information and act on it. His most important recent work centers on incidental exposure and how it contributes to political knowledge while his most impactful work focuses on social media’s role in informing and misinforming users. Across this work, he has been at the forefront of this rapidly expanding research domain concerning misinformation.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Weeks is an extremely productive and well-respected scholar, a committed and effective teacher, and a model departmental citizen. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Brian Weeks be promoted to the rank of associate professor of communication and media, 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