

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

Natalie Abell, assistant professor of classical studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of classical studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees

Ph.D.	2014	University of Cincinnati
M.A.	2008	University of Cincinnati
B.A.	2003	Indiana University

Professional Record

2015-present      Assistant Professor, Department of Classical Studies, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Abell is a committed and innovative teacher at all levels. She has taught ten different courses in her time at UM in archaeology, Aegean prehistory, and the team-taught course offered by the Mediterranean Cluster. Most notable are her unconventional upper-level courses in ceramics analysis that give students firsthand experience in methods of pottery manufacture (using studios at the Stamps School) and in working with fragments of broken thrift-store pottery in lieu of ancient artifacts. She also works with UROP students and visitors in the MICHHERS program. Professor Abell sponsors the Collaborative Archaeology Workshop, which brings together students in both classical and anthropological archaeology, and has served on nine dissertation committees, including co-chairing one.

Research: Since arriving at UM, Professor Abell has published a monograph, Ayia Irini: Area B, four articles in refereed journals (plus another two accepted for publication), and four chapters in refereed, edited volumes (plus two forthcoming and another five that have been submitted for review). This is a robust output considering that she also is an active participant in no fewer than four archaeological excavations. As her conference presentations and invited talks and contributions attest, Professor Abell is well-respected internationally as an expert in Aegean prehistory, modes of exchange, and the analysis of ceramic fragments, the most ubiquitous material remains of ancient societies. She excels at both traditional stylistic-typological analysis and macro-microscopic analysis, which required extensive additional training, and currently is developing a second specialism in metallurgy. Her productivity shows no signs of slowing down, and her next monograph project (on market-based trade during the Bronze Age in the Cycladic Islands) expands the scope of her research and positions her for wider impact in the field.

Recent and Significant Publications

Ayia Irini: Area B (Keos XII). Columbus, Georgia: Lockwood Press, 2021.

“Rethinking Household-Based Production at Ayia Irini, Kea: An Examination of Technology and Organization in a Bronze Age Community of Practice.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 124, no. 3 (2020): 381–416.

Gorogianni, Evi, Natalie Abell, and Jill Hilditch. “Aegean Fusion Cuisine: Ayia Irini, Kea as Cultural ‘Middle Ground.’” In *From Cooking Vessels to Cultural Practices in the Late Bronze Age*

*Aegean*, edited by Julie Hruby and Debra Trusty, 59–71. Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2017.

“Minoanisation in the Middle Bronze Age: Evaluating the Role of Cycladic Producers and Consumers.” *Annual of the British School at Athens* 111 (2016): 71–93.

Service: In addition to a full slate of departmental assignments (undergraduate advisor for archaeology, a lecturer review committee, the departmental executive committee, and undergraduate prize coordinator), Professor Abell is a core member of the Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology and of the Faculty Cluster “The Mediterranean Perspective on Global History and Culture.” She has ample experience as a reviewer for major journals in her field and numerous academic presses. She has also served for five years as the president of the local chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America, an organization that brings together specialists and interested members of the general public.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “[Professor Abell’s] major contributions lie in the prehistory of the Aegean, more specifically in the study of interaction and exchange with a regional focus on the Cycladic islands, specifically Kea/Keos. Among her publications in this area, her volume in the Kea/Keos publication series (Keos XII, just about to appear with a new publisher for the series), stands out. It is substantial (c. 400pp.) and treats the material (the entire history of Area B, from the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE) with scrupulous thoroughness...She adds value to the treatment by bringing in her expertise in ceramic petrology and including WDXRF chemical analyses (based on her training at the BSA’s Fitch Laboratory), thus facilitating a far more nuanced evaluation of local, vs. non-local (Cycladic, mainland, Cretan) ceramic products than is often the case.”

Reviewer (B): “Professor Abell’s scholarship incorporates major current themes: migration, production, identity. She brings the Aegean perspective, while masterfully incorporating the archaeological, ethnographic, and ethnoarchaeological comparanda from other cultural horizons. She is a bridge between Mediterranean Archaeology and anthropology...In terms of methodology, she demonstrates full control both of the broader theoretical paradigms but also the micro view from the visual analysis of a sherd [sic], to the macroscopic analysis of metallurgical slag. She commands the entire spectrum of archaeological activities: she publishes legacy data (previously excavated material), she is an active participant in current field projects, both excavation and survey, she designs new projects, and directs archaeometric analyses. As Public Humanities are becoming extremely important in our field, she is a great advocate for academic and public education as her articles for archaeological manuals show.”

Reviewer (C): “Abell is a rarity in being strong in both the traditional typo-stylistic analysis that is the bedrock of chronology and regionalisms, and the study of fabrics and technologies. By combining both she can truly create a holistic view of an assemblage that then reveals the variety of choices being made by artisans...she is able to zoom out, extricate herself from all the complications of the data, and see the wood from the trees.”

Reviewer (D): “I was particularly impressed by the detail and depth of technical understanding on display in Professor Abell’s forthcoming article in *Hesperia* (‘In Sync: Keian Insights on Pottery Chronologies’); by the discussion of social archaeology in the *AJA* 2016 co-authored article (‘Reconsidering Technical Transmission’), although this is the best of several articles and book chapters which essentially cover the same theme and material; and the forthcoming article on

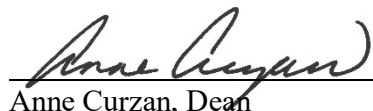
‘Assessing Insular Economic Strategies,’ as this shows flexibility and diversity of thought, as well as some bold new ideas.’

Reviewer (E): “What’s especially admirable about her work is how it is ultimately based on mastery of a complementary set of technical skills of ceramic analysis...This skill set allows her to produce analyses that are empirically rich and that add to the archaeological record and to its interpretation at the same time. In my view, a distinctive skill set that contributes something new and productive to the scholarly conversation is what distinguishes the elite tier of scholars from the rest; the former lead, the latter follow. In terms of the scholarly impact this research [sic], Prof. Abell is radically revising the way that the field understands the role of island communities in the formation of Aegean identities through careful analysis of a key archaeological site. She’s drawing attention to a number of broad issues, including the nature of economic exchanges, the position of metals in these exchange networks, the role of households in craft production, and the processes whereby island communities engaged with different influences from across the Aegean.”

Reviewer (F): “Dr. Abell publishes in the top journals in our field, such as *Annual of the British School at Athens*, *American Journal of Archaeology*, *Hesperia*, *Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici*, and *World Archaeology*—these are all international in scope...The journals listed have rigorous peer review processes, as do many of the presses she publishes in. In addition to these publications, she has a large number of conference presentations, many of which were at international venues. This in total is a large body of scholarly output.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Abell is a vital member of the Department of Classical Studies, the interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology, and the Mediterranean Cluster. She is a creative and original teacher and a leader in the field of Aegean prehistory. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Natalie Abell be promoted to the rank of associate professor of classical studies, 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 2022