

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
School for Environment and Sustainability

Sara Hughes, assistant professor of environment and sustainability, School for Environment and Sustainability, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of environment and sustainability, with tenure, School for Environment and Sustainability.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2011	University of California, Santa Barbara, Environmental Science and Management
M.S.	2006	Michigan State University, Fisheries and Wildlife
B.S.	2004	Michigan State University, Fisheries and Wildlife

Professional Record:

2019 – present	Assistant Professor, School for Environment and Sustainability, University of Michigan
2015 – 2019	Assistant Professor, Political Science, University of Toronto and University of Toronto Mississauga
2013 - 2014	Post-doctoral Fellow, National Research Program on Air, Climate, and Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
2011 – 2013	Post-doctoral Fellow, Climate Science and Applications Program, National Center for Atmospheric Research

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Hughes has established a solid record of teaching since joining SEAS. Her main portfolio consists of a required course for students in Environmental Policy and Planning, an elective course that is part of an emerging suite of courses at SEAS that provide an interdisciplinary focus on water, as well as a seminar on The Green New Deal. As a teacher, Professor Hughes strives to engage students in problem-oriented, critical thinking; to support students in building analytical and communication skills; and to help students identify ways they can participate in, and affect, the policy outcomes about which they care. She designs lectures, assignments, and classroom activities to encourage curiosity and critical thinking while developing students' understanding of the perspectives and tools used in political science and public policy analysis. Professor Hughes receives consistently strong teaching evaluations, and her scores have tended to improve as she refines and improves the courses. Students nominated her for the university's prestigious Golden Apple Award in 2021.

Professor Hughes created the Water and Climate Policy Lab at SEAS as a focal point for her research with, and mentoring of, students. She has served on five student committees; two current MSc. students; and active engagement in the SEAS capstone project process. She has advised three past masters project groups (one through the Graham Institute), which provided advice to Environmental Defense Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and the Cooperative Institute for Great Lakes Research, and is the advisor on a current project, whose client is the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. Her record bodes well for continued

productive engagement of graduate students in Professor Hughes' scholarship activities. We are confident that she will advise a respectable number of doctoral students given her robust program of student training and regular grant funding.

Research: Professor Hughes' research is situated within the field of urban politics and policy, with applied emphases on both water and climate. She uses mixed methods to explore climate change mitigation and drinking water practices and governance strategies in large urban areas. Her work focuses on how, when, and why governments make policy choices that advance urban sustainability and climate change goals; the institutional and political drivers of these choices; and the strategies and tools available to decision makers and advocates to build more just and sustainable urban futures. Professor Hughes' emphasis on urban governance and sustainability is particularly valuable as a source of insights leading to impact on key environmental challenges, and her contributions to the urban politics of both climate and water is noteworthy. Professor Hughes is well established professionally within the disciplinary domains of political science and public policy, and the interdisciplinary realms of urban and environmental policy. She was awarded the Clarence Stone Scholar Award by the Urban Politics section of the APSA in 2013, which recognizes young scholars making a significant contribution to the study of urban politics.

Professor Hughes has established an outstanding record of scholarship and research productivity, with peer-reviewed publications include 30 journal articles (including two forthcoming). Of these, 16 articles (including two forthcoming) were published during the six years she has been an assistant professor. Of her papers, she is first author of 19. She has authored two books (one as sole author; the other as an edited collection), both of which were published by high quality academic presses (Cornell University, Oxford University), and she has contributed 12 chapters to other edited books. She has also contributed to several synthesis reports, including climate-related reports published by the U.S. National Climate Assessment, the Urban Climate Change Research Network, the U.S. Global Change Research Program, and the U.N. Environment Program.

Professor Hughes has an admirable record of raising research funds in support of her research program. She has been credited with over \$1 million in external funding to support her research and that of collaborators. Notably, these funds have included large recent grants from the National Science Foundation and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. As her emphasis has expanded into issues of environmental justice, Professor Hughes has successfully taken advantage of seed funding opportunities within the University of Michigan, including securing funding from: Poverty Solutions, a university-wide presidential initiative, for a study of water affordability in Detroit; and the Graham Sustainability Institute for work examining justice issues in urban climate change adaptation.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Hughes, Sara, Daniel Miller Runfola, Benjamin Cormier\*. 2018. "Issue Proximity and Policy Response of Local Governments," *Review of Policy Research*, Vol. 35(2): 192-212.

Hughes, Sara. 2019. Repowering Cities: Governing Climate Change Mitigation in New York City, Los Angeles, and Toronto. Cornell University Press.

Hughes, Sara. 2020. "Flint, Michigan and the Politics of Safe Drinking Water in the US," *Perspectives on Politics*, First View, pp. 1-14. Miller SA. Five misperceptions surrounding

the environmental impacts of single-use plastic, *Environmental Science & Technology*, 2020, 54 (22): 14143-51.

Hughes, Sara, Sarah Giest, and Laura Tozer. 2020. "Accountability and Data-Driven Urban Climate Governance," *Nature Climate Change* 10: 1085-1090.

Hughes, Sara. 2016. "The politics of urban climate change policy: Toward a research agenda," *Urban Affairs Review* Vol. 53(2): 362-380.

Hughes, Sara, Stephanie Pincetl and Christopher Boone. 2013. "Triple Exposure: Regulatory, climatic, and political drivers of water management changes in the city of Los Angeles," *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning* 32: 51-59.

Service: At SEAS, Professor Hughes has already held several committee assignments, including PhD Admissions Committee, search committee for the SEAS Chief Diversity Officer, and DEI Subcommittee on Communications. She also represents SEAS on the Water @Michigan Collaborative and the Center for Integrated Great Lakes Research (CIGLR). Professor Hughes provides valuable service to professional organizations, civic organizations, and the university. She serves as an executive council member, an editorial board member on several journals, and as a reviewer in several venues: for 38 journals (including *Science* and *American Political Science Review*), international conferences, and national and international research programs (including NSF).

Professor Hughes regularly has presented talks at annual conferences and she has consistently presented invited talks at universities, including recent talks related to her book *Repowering Cities* at Indiana University, University of Virginia, University of California, Los Angeles, and Colorado College. She has presented numerous talks on urban climate change and water issues and policy to government agencies and community groups. Since joining the university, Professor Hughes has provided training in Ann Arbor to citizen climate ambassadors and serves as a member of the Water Conservation Program Review Committee for the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department. Overall, Professor Hughes' service and engagement reflects a purposeful approach to leveraging her scholarly expertise to benefit a variety of programs and organizations.

#### External Reviewers

Reviewer A: "...the priority she places on translating her research for practitioner audiences is laudable. Very often, our best policy work never leaves the confines of academia and therefore does not affect real-world decisions and processes. Dr. Hughes' focus on breaking that model is one that more scholars should share. It is especially notable since there is often not a reward structure in place for tenure track faculty to do this type of work... Her research is novel in its focus,...and by bringing together multiple methods and theoretical perspectives, she is making important contributions to political science and public policy fields."

Reviewer B: "Dr. Hughes is a careful scholar who asks and answers timely and relevant public policy research questions in a clear and rigorous manner. She has a coherent research agenda and her scholarship provides important insights at the intersection of urban governance and environmental challenges, specifically climate change and drinking water."

Reviewer C: "Dr. Hughes' work has also foreseen the need for research to address questions of equity, justice, and sustainability in academia and for local governments who have tried to

address these issues through the lens of climate and environmental policy... Dr. Hughes continues to advance research that is cross-cutting and discipline leading.”

Reviewer D: “Her methods and ideas are sophisticated, yet grounded in straight-forward logic and clear rationale. Her body of research reflects a deep knowledge of urban governance theories and she thoughtfully applies them to new issues and dynamics. As a result, her presentation of arguments is often quite powerful.”

Reviewer E: “Sara epitomizes a commitment to collaborative and interdisciplinary research, which is promoted in numerous field[s] of scholarship today but essential to understanding climate and sustainability challenges and the design of policy implementation strategies... And her commitment to telling the story through in-depth case and comparative case methodology that makes the work accessible to both the academic and informed public audience.”

Reviewer F: “I am confident in describing Dr. Hughes as part of the vanguard of researchers focused on local environmental politics who have emerged in the past fifteen years. She is a respected figure among those peers, and easily on the ‘short list’ of active scholars of American local government environmental policy researchers. ...Professor Sara Hughes’ overall body of work reveals a highly productive, ambitious scholar and expert on American local climate and water policy. All available evidence indicates that she will continue to be these things in the years to come.”

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Hughes has established an upward trajectory in scholarly achievement and a solid record in teaching and mentoring. She provides valuable service both externally and at the university and has used her professional service to establish a productive network of colleagues and collaborators in her field. I enthusiastically recommend Sara Hughes for promotion to associate professor of environment and sustainability, with tenure, School for Environment and Sustainability.



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Jonathan T. Overpeck  
Samuel A. Graham Dean  
School for Environment and Sustainability

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