

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

Christi A. Merrill, associate professor of comparative literature, with tenure, and associate professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of comparative literature, with tenure, and professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1999	University of Iowa
M.F.A.	1999	University of Iowa
M.F.A.	1993	University of Iowa
Diploma	1988	Banaras Hindu University
B.A.	1987	University of Michigan

Professional Record:

2009–present	Associate Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan
2001-2009	Assistant Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan
2004-2005	Visiting Fellow, Society for the Humanities, Cornell University
2000-2001	Assistant Professor, Asian and Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures Division, University of Virginia
1999-2000	Visiting Lecturer, Asian and Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures Division, University of Virginia

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Merrill has successfully taught an array of specialist courses for Asian languages and cultures on South Asian literature at the undergraduate level. The courses she teaches in comparative literature are core contributions to the curriculum. This includes service courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, making crucial contributions to the university's offerings in translation studies. Professor Merrill's teaching at the graduate level provides students with pedagogical training, professional skills, and preparation for important milestones such as the preliminary exam. Her innovative syllabi demonstrate how her course designs and topics grow out of her scholarly commitments as a theorist, activist translator, and scholar of literature and the digital humanities.

Research: Professor Merrill is a scholar of South Asian literature and post-colonial theory with a specialization in translation studies, which she applies to a range of source materials and genres, including but not limited to oral literature and performance, digital technologies, travel writing, life writing, and testimony, especially in the context of human rights and justice. She is an internationally recognized translator of Hindi literature, particularly of work by Dalit authors, whose community has been at the bottom of India's caste-based social system for over two

millennia. Her dossier represents a multifaceted, yet cohesive project that mobilizes philological and cultural research to enrich public discourse around human rights. She demonstrates an organic movement from the study of Dalit literature in Hindi to its implications for translation and postcolonial theory, and from theory to its practical dividends in conversations about human rights, justice, and the social mechanisms of marginalization.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“‘Justice’ in Translation.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 43, no. 5 (2020): 970-87.

“Dalit Consciousness and Translating Consciousness: Narrating Trauma as Cultural Translation.” *Translation: A Transdisciplinary Journal* 5 (2017): 47-64.

“The Lyricism of Violence: Faith in Revolution.” *Boundary 2* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 119-45.

“The Afterlives of Pandity and Other Vernacular Questions.” In *Cultural Transactions: ‘Translation’ in India and Beyond*, edited by Rita Kothari and Judy Wakabayashi, 75-94. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishers, 2009.

Service: Professor Merrill’s service, leadership, and governance are informed by her expertise in language, postcolonial theory, race, caste, gender, human rights, and social justice, and they reflect the deep interconnectedness of her research and teaching and her commitment to translation as a critical and creative enterprise. She took a leading role in developing and supporting the undergraduate minor in translation studies and the graduate certificate in critical translation studies in the Department of Comparative Literature. Professor Merrill has also served on a variety of important committees in both of her departments. In addition to serving on the Graduate Committee and Admissions Committee in Comparative Literature, she took on a leadership role as the director of graduate studies for two years. She has served as a Rackham diversity ally and a participant in MICHHERS, and she has been actively involved in the DEI Committees for both of her departments.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “Engaging a wide range of theorists...she produces in-depth explorations of Dalit texts, particularly those of Dalit feminists...the texts are anything but straightforward accounts of victimhood, atrocity, or triumph. Rather they demand new ways of reading—ways that unsettle our usual academic and pedagogical approaches as they question Euro-US understandings of ‘genre,’ and often, of ‘justice.’”

Reviewer (B): “Merrill’s work is interdisciplinary, bringing together approaches from postcolonial and translation theory, applied to issues of human rights and violence. She does this by adopting a wide variety of analytical modes, as well as different narrative strategies, including the essay, travel writing, ethnography and testimony.”

Reviewer (C): “The quality of Christi Merrill’s works is high. She intervenes in the field of translation studies as a pivot between area studies and comparative literature, and in doing so enriches all three fields.”

Reviewer (D): “She is probably the only scholar in the United States who is equipped to provide scholarly-informed translations of works that deal with complex ethical issues (such as Dalit writing) and actually she has successfully introduced Dalit writing into English and made us

aware of the complexity of this enterprise...Her work of and on translation embodies the best of what translation scholars and translators have been calling for.”

Reviewer (E): “Merrill’s work has a distinctive voice, a voice that moves and enthralls me, her reader. It is not the usual academic voice from the sky that demonstrates its mastery over the field it ‘covers’ but a voice that invites the reader to think things together with Merrill, the writer.”

Reviewer (F): “Each of her three statements speaks of a deeply committed scholar who lives as well as thinks about issues of positionality, access, empowerment, and cultural mediation, and whose teaching and practice really impact her research. I can only imagine what a contribution she must have made to the University of Michigan!”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Merrill is an innovative scholar whose writings deftly intertwine comparative literature, area studies, translation studies, and creative writing. As an instructor her interdisciplinary approach in the classroom mirrors her scholarly accomplishments. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Christi A. Merrill be promoted to the rank of professor of comparative literature, with tenure, and professor of Asian languages and cultures, 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

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