

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

Rachel Rafael Neis, associate professor of history, with tenure, and associate professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of history, with tenure, and professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2007	Harvard University
M.A.	2001	Boston University
LL.B.	1998	London School of Economics

Professional Record:

2018–present	Affiliate Faculty: Institute of Research on Women and Gender, Department of Comparative Literature, Science, Technology, and Society Program
2013–present	Associate Professor, with tenure, and Jean and Samuel Frankel Professor of Rabbinic Literature Department of History and Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan
2015–present	Core Faculty, Interdepartmental Program in Ancient History
2007–2013	Assistant Professor, History Department and Judaic Studies, University of Michigan
	Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Michigan Law School
2005–2007	Visiting Researcher, Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan Lecturer, University of Michigan Law School
2005–2006	Fellow, Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies
Fall 2004	Lecturer, Departments of Jewish Studies & Religion, Rutgers University

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Neis has taught an impressive array of courses organized by a diverse set of conceptual categories, from the Talmud and ancient law to sex and sexuality in Jewish history, all of which have garnered praise from students and colleagues. Students note Professor Neis's expertise as well as their approachability. Their record is marked by a profound commitment to supporting students from diverse backgrounds, and by high levels of creativity and innovation in instructional and evaluative pedagogies

Research: Professor Neis is a specialist in ancient history and Jewish studies whose work focuses on the rabbinic movement of the first centuries C.E. in ways that place rabbinic thought in the context of the Mediterranean world of late antiquity, and in ways that apply contemporary theories to destabilize all-too-common assumptions about how they conceptualized biological classifications, gender, sexuality, and knowledge in general. Professor Neis has published seven peer-reviewed articles, with international impact. Professor Neis's current book manuscript, under contract with University of California Press, promises to cement their standing as a leader

in the field, while paving the way for future groundbreaking analysis of rabbinics, ancient law, and feminist science studies.

Recent and Significant Publications:

“Generating Bodies of Knowledge: Food, Family, and Fetus in Early Rabbinic Science.” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 10, no. 2 (2019): 181-210

“The Seduction of Law: Rethinking Legal Studies in Jewish Studies.” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 109, no. 1 (2019): 119-138

“The Reproduction of Species: Humans, Animals, and Species Nonconformity in Early Rabbinic Science.” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2017): 289-317

“Ancient Visual Theory.” Hebrew version of Chapter 2 of *Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*. Translated by Daphna Rosenbluth. In *Visual Culture in Israel*, edited by Sivan Rajuan Shtang and Noa Hazan, 675-717. Bnei Brak, Israel: Hakibbutz Hameukha–Sifriat Poalim Publishing House, 2017.

Service: Professor Neis has made notable contributions to each unit in which they are appointed and with which they are affiliated, and has become an important voice in campus DEI work around transgender/nonbinary rights. They have participated in the broadening of the Interdisciplinary Program in Ancient History, and in efforts such as the Open Access Rabbinic Project aimed at making rabbinic texts and scholarship more publicly accessible.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “When reading the book manuscript in progress, I found myself speculating that its impact in Rabbinics might be akin to that of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* in gender studies writ large. I see in Neis’ work a capacity to change the terms of inquiry in a way that exceeds that of their peers.”

Reviewer (B): “I consider Dr. Neis to be among the top ten scholars currently active in the field of Rabbinic Judaism, and among those ten Neis is the scholar whose work is the most creative, the most daring, and the most ambitious in attempting to reach a broad readership in the humanities and social sciences.”

Reviewer (C): “Neis works at the most advanced level of technical skill and theoretical acumen, but Neis is also committed to the accessibility of scholarship and its dispersion among the wider public. Their new digital humanities project, Open Access Rabbinic Project (OARP), aims at introducing academic Talmud study to diverse audiences. The project promises to break open the field of Rabbinics, which has a history of privileging men with yeshiva training.”

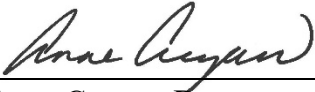
Reviewer (D): “If field-defining and theoretically-inflected scholarship and artistic productivity are not enough, Dr. Neis has also proven themselves to be very good professional citizens at the University and in the field as a whole.”

Reviewer (E): “It is easy to conclude that Dr. Rachel Rafel Neis is at the forefront of Rabbinic studies today. In comparison to some outstanding colleagues that are roughly of Dr. Neis’ academic age, some of whom have already attained their Full Professor appointment whereas some are in the process of getting it, [they rate] very high.”

Reviewer (F): “It is very refreshing to see how much Neis enjoys thinking with the rabbis. They make no effort to whitewash them or to condemn them. Neis states at the outset that they will not judge the rabbis for not conforming to contemporary standards, and they consistently adhere to that policy throughout the book. It was inspiring to experience the passion with which they follow the ideas of the rabbis to their often astounding conclusions, despite the fact that they are often problematic (to say the least), albeit brilliant, from a contemporary perspective.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Neis is a highly visible and creative scholar who has impressed their peers as well as the most advanced scholars in multiple fields with their ability to reframe essential questions framing a canonical body of textual work. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Rachel Rafael Neis be promoted to the rank of professor of history, with tenure, and professor of Judaic studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Anne Curzan, Dean
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English Language and Literature, Linguistics,
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