

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan–Dearborn
College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters

Kristin Poling, assistant professor of social sciences, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of social sciences, with tenure, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2011	Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
M.A.	2005	Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
B.A.	2003	Washington University, St. Louis, MO

Professional Record:

2014-present	Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, University of Michigan–Dearborn
2012-2014	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Poling is rated excellent in teaching. She is one of the most talented instructors at UM-Dearborn and her accomplishments were rewarded with the University’s Distinguished Teaching Award in 2021. She designs innovative and creative assignments dedicated to the practice of having students own their own learning and create their own knowledge. Her classroom is highly interactive and cultivates students’ historical imagination. She takes risks in her teaching and creates space for students to take risks as well. She has been on the leading edge of pedagogical innovation. When the pandemic hit, she threw herself into it wholeheartedly and designed exemplary online courses. Over the last six years, she has made enormous changes in her teaching strategies. She is a highly reflective teacher and takes students’ feedback seriously, continuing to modify and improve her methods. Professor Poling incorporates her research into her courses in the model of a teacher-scholar and accordingly she has developed several new courses for the history discipline. She teaches a substantial array of courses, including upper-level German history, introductory world history, a research capstone, and an Honors course. Her teaching evaluations are a testament to the excitement she generates in students. Her overall average is an impressive 4.7 (on a 5.0 scale).

Research: Professor Poling is rated excellent in research. Her research is on the cutting edge of German history and urban history in the 19th and 20th centuries. Her book, Germany’s Urban Frontiers: Nature and History on the Edge of the Nineteenth Century City (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), focuses on the walls and removal of walls around several German cities, and uses that close examination of the peripheries of various cities to explore borders, both physical and metaphorical. She weaves in social, economic, political, and environmental history and uses multiple forms of evidence and methodologies. Her unique approach is to explore a city’s history from the outside in. She displays her versatile and creative research skills in this book, along with her facility in incorporating theory into a clear narrative.

Additionally, Professor Poling has published two solo-authored journal articles and one book chapter since she arrived at UM-Dearborn. One of her articles in a well-regarded journal features an innovative analysis of Shantytowns in Berlin. Her chapter “Occupying No Man’s Land” examines events in the 1980s before the fall of the Berlin Wall and produces a sophisticated spatial analysis of political resistance. She also expanded her reach into Michigan history with her article “A Walhalla in the Wasteland” about a German American and his plans for reforestation parts of northern Michigan in the early 20th century. This publication demonstrates her motivation to explore interconnections and move into transnational research. Her next research projects will continue to explore German American connections on topics such as modern playgrounds and narratives about wastelands and she has a chapter coming out in a prestigious book about Berlin in early 2022.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Poling, Kristin. Germany’s Urban Frontiers: Nature and History on the Edge of the Nineteenth-Century City (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020).

Poling, Kristin. “A *Walhalla* in the Wasteland: Carl Ernest Schmidt and the Quest of One German-American Businessman to Save Michigan’s Forests” *Michigan Historical Review* (September 2020): 1-30.

Poling, Kristin. “Shantytowns and Pioneers Beyond the City Wall: Berlin’s Urban Frontier in the Nineteenth Century,” *Central European History* 47 (2014): 245-274.

Poling, Kristin. “Occupying No Man’s Land in the Lenné Triangle: Space, Spectacle, and Politics in the Shadow of the Berlin Wall,” In C. Loeb and A. Luescher (Eds.), *The Design of Frontier Spaces: Control and Ambiguity* (Ashgate, 2015): 31-44.

Service: Professor Poling is rated excellent in service. She has provided tremendous service to the UM-Dearborn History discipline and to the university at large. Much of her service consists of projects and initiatives she has created to cultivate the health of the history discipline and the advancement of our history students. Most notably, she has served as the faculty advisor of the history student organizations for several years and has organized many events open to all students, such as alumni talks, career events, and advising events. During the last year and half, she organized social and advising events on Zoom for our students as well as virtual graduation ceremonies to honor our history graduates. In addition to providing close mentoring of history students, she has been a leader in program assessment and evaluating the electronic portfolio of work required of our students. She has also provided service and mentoring to the Honors Program.

Professor Poling recently served a term as CASL representative on Faculty Senate, and she was by all accounts one of the most active senators during a period when many meaningful changes were being considered by the Senate. During this time she also stepped up to serve on the Senate Council, which brings added responsibility and shows her commitment to faculty governance. Furthermore, she was a key member of the Faculty Senate’s Task Force on Student Retention.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: “Kristin Poling’s research accomplishments are remarkable...This book has already made quite a splash in the field of urban studies...Her work gives clear indication that she is only getting started and that she has many plans ahead.”

Reviewer B: “In her innovative way of approaching her topics and constructing her analysis, she develops alternative frameworks for understanding Germany’s modern history that are both locally rooted and archivally grounded...[H]er mode of interweaving urban history with environmental history...is particularly original...Her scholarship is both thorough and imaginative, well written and impressively argued...I would place her in the top group of historians currently working on German urbanism.”

Reviewer C: “*Germany’s Urban Frontiers* is beautifully written with an original and compelling argument and sits neatly and elegantly across several important areas of research...Poling’s work knits together so many strands of German history that have previously been viewed as separate. That is a tremendous and important achievement.”

Reviewer D: “Dr. Poling is a scholar of what I call urban-environmental history in Germany, and her work is both very high quality and cutting edge...[H]er chapter ‘Shantytown Frontier’ must be one of the best chapters of any monograph I’ve read in quite some time. It is a tour de force of conceptualization, asking the right questions (which no one else seems to be asking), blending urban and environmental history, and sharp, clear, even witty writing, and excellent research.”

Reviewer E: “I realized ways that I need to modify how I teach European urban history, thanks to her book...Dr. Poling is part of the avant garde, attuned to big questions that matter today and highly creative in finding excellent themes and topics beyond the strictures of the nation-state in which to explore them. “

Reviewer F: “The quantity of her publications is excellent for a scholar at her career stage. With these publications and her presentations, she has established herself as an important member of her generation of environmental historians of Central Europe.”

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Poling is the very embodiment of the scholar-teacher model. She brings reflection and innovation to her research and her classrooms, while upholding the highest standards for impactful service. It is with the support of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters Executive Committee that I recommend Kristin Poling for promotion to associate professor of social sciences, with tenure, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters.



Martin J. Hershock, Dean
College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters



Domenico Grasso, Chancellor
University of Michigan-Dearborn

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