

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

Scott Stonington, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of anthropology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of anthropology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

M.D.	2011	University of California, San Francisco
Ph.D.	2009	University of California, San Francisco and University of California, Berkeley Joint Program in Medical Anthropology
B.A.	2000	Stanford University

Professional Record:

2016 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan
2016 – present	Internal Medicine Primary Care Physician: IHA Neighborhood Family Health Center
2016 – present	Internal Medicine Hospitalist Physician: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Ann Arbor, MI, Academic Housestaff Service

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Dr. Stonington's teaching responsibilities are split between Anthropology and International Studies. Of particular programmatic importance for the Department of Anthropology is his pivotal role in developing the medical anthropology curriculum, for which there is burgeoning student demand. He also trains medical students and residents through his clinical practice. His signature undergraduate course, on global health, enrolls about 120 students with very high evaluations. Both enrollments and evaluations of his 300-level course on the globalization of biomedicine started strong and have been growing steadily. Dr. Stonington is very reflective about inclusive pedagogy and ethics in his teaching. In addition to his graduate seminars, he chairs five dissertation committees and sits on 10 others, a high number for an assistant professor in our department.

Research: Dr. Stonington's research analyzes bio-medical practice through ethnographically informed social science theory. One track uses his extensive fieldwork in Thailand to analyze and compare bio-medical practices and ethics in the clinical diagnosis and management of pain and death there and in the United States. Examining how Thai who are caring for dying kin negotiate the competing ethical demands and assumptions of Western biomedicine and Theravada Buddhism, he shows the limits of conventional medical ethics. He finds that bioethical norms common in Western and Thai hospitals, which privilege the autonomy and self-determination of individual patients, clash with the imperatives of filial debt and karmic consequences recognized by their clientele. His more recent work focuses on contrastive norms surrounding pain and its treatment in Thailand and the U.S., with important implications for how we understand the opioid epidemic. A second research track draws on his dual training in medicine and anthropology, as well as his continued clinical practice, to analyze bio-medical

practice and develop new modes of physician training. Writing as an insider, he details with unusual authority what physicians in the ICU do not know and do not even think they know about what ails their patients. Many of his publications from this research are addressed to medical clinicians. This work is not simplified translation, nor does it take the conventional approach of making anthropology into a handmaiden for facilitating medical practice, through an understanding of patients' "culture." Instead, Dr. Stonington shows how to transform medical practice itself in order to do better medicine. It is notable that he publishes in both social science and medical journals.

Recent and Significant Publications:

The Spirit Ambulance: Choreographing the End of Life in Thailand. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020. (Winner of biannual New Millennium Prize, Society for Medical Anthropology; honorable mention Sharon Stephens Prize for first book, American Ethnological Society; honorable mention Edie Turner Prize for ethnographic writing, Society for Humanistic Anthropology)

“‘Making moves’ in a cardiac ICU: an epistemology of rhythm, data-richness and process certainty.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2020): 344-360.

“Karma masters: the ethical wound, (hau)ntological choreography, and complex personhood in Thailand.” *American Anthropologist* 122, no. 4 (2020): 759–770.

“‘Acute-on-chronic:’ states of emergency, the social pain body and the one-way ‘staircase’ of pharmaceutical escalation.” *Medical Anthropology* 2021. [Online ahead of print].

Service: Dr. Stonington has taken on heavy duties in the department (among others, terms on the Executive and Curriculum Committees, a search committee, and two terms on Admissions) and the college (including the Steering Committees for both the Medical Humanities and the Science, Technology, and Society Programs). He developed and rationalized the Department of Anthropology's relationship with the NIH-funded Medical Science Training Program. At the university level, he was the only assistant professor appointed to the President's Advisory Committee on the Ethics and Privacy of COVID, which met weekly during the 2020-21 academic year. In the wider profession, he was co-founder of the Society for Humanities and Social Sciences in Medicine, and a member of the Executive Council of the American Physician Scientist Association.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “In fact I was surprised to learn that he was not already an Associate Professor, because frankly given his achievements and the multiple fields he straddles so effectively and to which he contributes creatively he deserves to be a full professor at this stage.”

Reviewer (B): “Dr. Stonington reveals a deep understanding of Thai Buddhism...I found myself resonating with each of the vignettes he describes, recognizing the accuracy of his description but being led to deeper insights into the underlying invisible complex tangle of cultural logics at play. His writing style is masterfully straightforward, conjoining ethnographic vignettes (or case studies) rich in empirical detail with sophisticated theoretical insights drawing on his evident wide ranging reading. I have often complained to colleagues that anthropologists write books that are impossible for undergraduates to follow. Dr. Stonington has accomplished a rare feat, a book that can appeal to undergraduates and specialists alike.”

Reviewer (C): “Professor Stonington has also achieved the impressive feat of communicating the relevance of anthropology in clinical domains. This accomplishment is often sought and rarely achieved by medical anthropologists, with medical professionals commonly struggling to link medical anthropology to clinical applications or medical training, and commonly perceiving critique as hostility.”

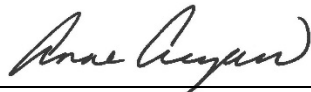
Reviewer (D): “I have been aware of Dr. Stonington’s work for some time, partly because he has long been identified as a pioneer in building a career as an MD physician with a PhD in anthropology. As a teacher of graduate students who have worked their way through similar demanding advanced training programs, I have been very impressed with Dr. Stonington’s achievements.”

Reviewer (E): “While Dr. Stonington may be described as a medical anthropologist, what unifies his work is careful attention to how decision making unfolds, especially in situations where the choices are not clear cut. This work, in what could be called practical epistemology, is of relevance well beyond medical anthropology. Given his theoretical interests and his very gifted talent as a writer I imagine he is going to become a widely known and influential anthropologist.”

Reviewer (F): “The epitome of a public anthropologist, Stonington’s work is already making waves both within and beyond the confines of academia. As I will outline below, Stonington has established a reputation as the most important anthropologist of his generation writing on end-of-life issues.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Dr. Stonington has compiled an outstanding record of excellence in research and teaching, and his extensive record of service at the University of Michigan and in the profession is exemplary. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Scott Stonington, M.D., Ph.D. be promoted to the rank of associate professor of anthropology, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Anne Curzan, Dean
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