

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

Cameron Cross, assistant professor of Middle East studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of Middle East studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

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| Ph.D. | 2015 | University of Chicago |
| M.A. | 2010 | University of Chicago |
| M.A. | 2007 | University of Chicago |
| B.A. | 2004 | University of Colorado, Boulder |

Professional Record:

2015-present Assistant Professor of Iranian Studies, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Since his arrival at UM in 2015, Professor Cross has developed a suite of twelve topical and content courses at each of the 200-500 levels. These courses represent a broad repertoire that has enabled the Department of Middle East Studies to attract new students and meet the needs of four critical audiences: Persian language learners, master's and doctoral students in Middle East studies and comparative literature, majors/minors in Middle East and Islamic studies, and curious beginners. The department has experienced a particular need for courses at the 300- and 400-level and Professor Cross has offered six in response. Professor Cross' consistent collaboration with Professor Behrad Aghaie, Teaching Professor of Persian Language, to restructure the Persian language program in a tightly articulated sequence of topics courses is worthy of special attention. Professor Cross teaches literature and culture in translation to pique and deepen curiosity, Professor Aghaie's beginning Persian language courses cultivate linguistic acumen, and Professor Cross' content courses focus on language mastery. As a result, the Persian program at UM has grown sixfold in enrollment over the past eight years. This close collaboration has created programmatic cohesion and speaks to Professor Cross' ability to design appealing and engaging courses.

Research: Professor Cross has published a book (University of Toronto Press), five peer-reviewed articles, two book reviews, and two translations from Persian to English, with one peer-reviewed article currently under review, since joining the department in 2015. His work in progress includes a second major scholarly monograph, tentatively titled The Other Shahnameh: Reading the Book of Kings as the Book of Outsiders. He is also at work on a translation of the New Persian epic *Varqa & Gulshah*. Professor Cross' monograph, Love at a Crux, is the centerpiece of his promotion case. In this work Professor Cross situates himself as a comparativist of regional literatures. His context is the global Middle Ages at an explosive moment when discourses on love were expressed in multiple vernacular languages across western Eurasia. The future trajectory Professor Cross has outlined in his research statement, moving from the Mediterranean to explore Asia and the Indo-Persian literary networks of exchange, has great relevance for thinking even more broadly and deeply about comparative literatures and the Medieval Global. Professor Cross consistently situates his work within the larger field of medieval Persian studies, both in terms of how his research builds on and sometimes revises methods and assumptions in the field, but also in terms of the contributions that medieval Persian studies make to medieval studies and literary studies more broadly.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Love at a Crux: The New Persian Romance in a Global Middle Ages. Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press, 2023.

“Spiderweb Stories: *Varqa & Gulshāh, Floire & Blancheflor*, and the Strands of an Interconnected Middle Ages.” *The Medieval Globe*, 2024 [submitted for review].

“Poetic Alchemy: The Rise of Persian Romance in a Comparative Context.” *Medieval Encounters*, 2023 [forthcoming].

“The Lives and Afterlives of *Vis and Rāmin*.” *Iranian Studies* 51, no. 4 (2018): 517–56.

“A Tree Atop the Mountain: Mobad Manikan and the Elusive Promises of Masculinity.” *Iran Namag* 3, no. 1 (2018): xxvi–lxiii.

“The Many Colors of Love in Nizāmī’s *Haft Paykar*: Beyond the Spectrum.” *Interfaces* 2, (2016): 52–96.

“‘If Death Is Just, What Is Injustice?’ Illicit Rage in ‘Rostam and Sohrab’ and ‘The Knight’s Tale.’” *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 3(2015): 395–422.

Service: Professor Cross served as an undergraduate advisor for Middle East Studies (MES) from 2018-2021 and as a member of several departmental and LSA executive committees: the Graduate Program Committee (MES); Lecture Series and Hajja Razia Sharif Sheikh Lecture Committee (MES); Medieval and Early Modern Studies; and the Center for Middle East and North African Studies. He has organized a number of departmental and student-focused events and has served on several lecturer review committees. He also currently serves on the DEI committee. He has provided service appropriate for his rank as assistant professor.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “I was impressed by [Professor Cross]’ firm command of his diverse linguistic material (Persian, Arab, Old French, Middle Greek), his solid and clearly applied methodological tools, his innovative literary analysis, and his talent as a public speaker. The felicitous coincidence of our approaches gave us the opportunity to engage in a serious and productive discussion about a number of issues concerning the ‘genre of romance’ in the Eurasian Middle Ages. I had the opportunity of hearing [Professor Cross] deliver papers at two recent conferences (Vienna, January 2020 and Mainz, January 2023), and my initial positive impression of his qualities as a scholar, thinker and speaker were further confirmed, as he was presenting more complex and deeper analyses of the subjects that he has been working on...”

Reviewer (B): “In sum, with *Love at a Crux*, Cameron Cross makes an important contribution to scholarship that promises to have a significant impact not only within his own field of Iranian Studies but also more broadly in the neighboring fields of Medieval Studies, Mediterranean Studies, and Comparative Literature. I expect this book to have a major place in these fields, and have already recommended it to a colleague as an ideal selection for their undergraduate course on medieval romance.”

Reviewer (C): “Whilst working with [Professor Cross]—always at long-distance, by email—on his dissertation I was very impressed by his diligence, by his thoroughness in following up suggestions, by the meticulously scholarly habits he had already developed, and by his openness to new suggestions (I have occasionally felt that he might be a bit too open to every academic wind that blows, but much better a [junior] academic be that than its dour deliberately provincial opposite).”

Reviewer (D): “Quite simply, this book is one of the most impressive readings of a single romance in any language that I know of. Where explorations of the origins of medieval romance are often caught in the dyad of twelfth-century French versus Byzantine examples (which came first? Which influenced the other?), Professor Cross expands the frame, moving us a century earlier and thousands of miles east, from Troyes/Constantinople to Isfahan. One of the most impressive features of *Love at a Crux* is the way it combines macro-analysis (of the type pioneered by Franco Moretti’s concept of ‘distant reading’ or David Damrosch’s notion of ‘world literature’) with detailed close readings that bring out subtle continuities and shifts within *Vis and Ramin* itself, as well as the echoes that informed readers would have heard to previous Arabic and Persian works in several genres. Professor Cross can carry this off only because he writes with remarkable clarity.”

Reviewer (E): “Although I have known Prof. Cross for some time now, writing this assessment gave me my first occasion to read his publications all together. It is an impressive body of work. He has a full-length book in production at the University of Toronto Press, scheduled for publication later this year. He has four published articles, with two others forthcoming or under review. These are all well-developed, substantial articles and appear in high-profile journals, half of which focus on Iranian studies and half on medieval or comparative studies.”

Reviewer (F): “Professor Cross’s [sic] main contribution is twofold: not only is this a refreshingly detailed and cohesive study of the romance, but also a substantial expansion of the horizon against which this romance can be read, taking the text out of the purely Iranian-centered visions that have often commanded its interpretation. The dynamic intertextual and multicultural dialogues that flowed in that century between Iran, Byzantium, the Caucasus, and as far as French romance are kept at the forefront, proving the relevance of the idea of a global Middle Ages.”

Summary of Recommendation:

As a published literary critic and translator, Professor Cross has made important substantive contributions to the field. He is a superb teacher. He has provided outstanding service to the department and the university. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Cameron Cross be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Middle East studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Anne Curzan, Dean
Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of
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