

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

Abigail Dumes, assistant professor of women's and gender studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of women's and gender studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D. 2014 Yale University
M.A. 2007 Yale University
B.A. 2004 Washington University in St. Louis

Professional Record:

2019-present Assistant Professor, Women's and Gender Studies, University of Michigan
2016-2019 Lecturer I, Anthropology, University of Michigan
2015-2016 Research Affiliate, Anthropology, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Dumes has made significant contributions to the core undergraduate curriculum and the department's graduate programs. She has taken on the large enrollment undergraduate gateway course, 240: Introduction to Women's Studies. Her successful navigation of this course with changing platforms and methods of student engagement reflects the strength of her commitment as a teacher. Her syllabi are clear, well-organized, and diverse in topics, texts, and use of media. She has participated in LSA's Foundational Course Initiative to improve the teaching of this course. A peer observing her graduate course was impressed with her effort and skill in making the content relevant to students across a variety of disciplines and interests. Both her outstanding student evaluations and peer teaching observations indicate that Professor Dumes is a dedicated and successful teacher.

Research: Professor Dumes' work takes Lyme disease as a case study to explore a larger question of how the rise of "evidence-based medicine," intended to create epistemic certainty and establish medical authority, instead has created new forms of uncertainty. Her theoretically grounded ethnography shows how evidence-based medicine gives rise to multiple knowledge claims, including those of patients whose suffering may not be perceived as legitimate by medical professionals and policymakers. To address the complexity in interviews with informants standing in different relation to Lyme, she proposes the methodology of "quantum ethnography" in which the researcher takes on multiple situated standpoints. Her new project, which has already resulted in publication, as well as an essay in the *New York Times*, further explores the contours of contested illness through the lens of long COVID, which disproportionately affects communities of color.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Divided Bodies: Lyme Disease, Contested Illness, and Evidence-Based Medicine. Critical Global Health: Evidence, Efficacy, Ethnography, edited by Vincanne Adams and João Biehl. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020.

"Putting Ethnographic Flesh on New Materialist Bones: Lyme Disease and the Sex/Gender Binary." *Feminist Anthropology* 1, no. 2 (2020): 248-59.

“Lyme Disease and the Epistemic Tensions of ‘Medically Unexplained Illnesses.’” *Medical Anthropology: Cross-Cultural Studies in Health and Illness* 39, no. 6 (2020): 441-56.

“Making Sense of Sex and Gender Differences in Biomedical Research on COVID-19.” In *Being Human During COVID*, edited by Kristin Ann Hass, 266-70. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2021.

Service: In addition to her departmental service in Women’s and Gender Studies, which includes advising and serving on the department’s executive committee, Professor Dumes has a distinguished record of public engagement and national service related to her scholarly expertise, including community service addressing the availability of free COVID testing, particularly for under-resourced families, and appointment to the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine as a nationally recognized expert regarding long COVID. This level of leadership is very unusual for an assistant professor.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “*Divided Bodies* makes important contributions to understanding contested diseases, medically unexplained illnesses, the limitations of biomedicine, and the history of medicine. [Professor Dumes’] work synthesizes decades of medical research alongside experiences of those living with and treating Lyme disease. Her work serves as an example of how an ethnographic interrogation of medicine can reveal how and why biomedicine has reached particular conclusions and how the result may continue to fail patients.”

Reviewer (B): “Dr. Dumes’ scholarship stands out for its insightful methodological approach to examining lived experiences with Lyme disease as a highly ‘contested’ condition that is often difficult to diagnose via biomedical testing. As Dr. Dumes’ work demonstrates, the cultural and historical roots and ramifications of these limits to establishing a biomedical ‘verifiable’ tie between cause, symptoms, and diagnosis—particularly in relation to the rise of ‘evidence-based medicine’—are gendered. *Divided Bodies* and other publications based on that research also demonstrate that no disease is ever singular in meaning of manifestation.”

Reviewer (C): “Even as Dumes is telling us about Lyme she is also setting the stage for how to think about Babesiosis, or other vector-borne diseases like malaria whose prevalence in the US is rising amid climate change and ongoing suburban and exurban development. Lyme is also a feminized diagnosis, associated with white women, the classic hysterical subjects of western medicine. And indeed among patients white middle and upper class women are liable to have their symptoms of chronic Lyme dismissed by conventional physicians as psycho-emotional manifestations of their relative privilege, their boredom, even their need to calibrate their energy levels towards their wealth-earning older husbands. ... Dumes uses these openings to theorize complex epistemic conditions that scale up across laboratory, patient, clinical, and policy domains.”

Reviewer (D): “...this story of Lyme Disease, the power of medicine and the contestation of suffering, brings together strong empirical research in sophisticated theory. The prose is powerful; the theory and ethnographic and historic account are brought together with great skill. As might be anticipated given the Choice award, the work is absorbing, original and persuasive. The book, the articles and book chapters, and podcasts and other presentations, illustrate Abby Dumes’s [sic] skill as an anthropologist.”

Reviewer (E): “Dr. Dumes’s [sic] research exemplifies the best of medical anthropology. It is theoretically rich, ethnographically deep, and politically engaged.... Her writing reveals how

expertly she handles a political firestorm, which some people call ‘lyme wars.’ It is refreshing to read a book that is theoretically engaged and carefully balances both views of ‘conventional’ and ‘lyme literate’ clinicians, brokering an understanding of the costs and benefits of both approaches...It provides a starting point for unpacking the complexities that will arise, shift, and change as the American public grapples with the realities of post-viral (or bacterial) infections.”

Reviewer (F): “The premise of the work is quite brilliant and even more timely in the COVID-19 era: evidence-based medicine is itself not a monolithic practice and can yield differential orientations to the diagnosis and management of illness. The Methodology of quantum ethnography, a metaphor that draws on quantum physics and the presence of all matter everywhere at the same time, figures as Dumes’s [sic] orienting method. She will not take one position, be that of the fictitious (and outdated) ‘neutral’ ethnographer, nor of the Lyme literate nor the conventional medical practitioners. ... Rather, she occupies all positions at once, and demonstrates that through distinctive engagements with evidence-based practice, medical personnel can come to radically different approaches to the management of Lyme disease.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Dumes’ research addresses pressing issues about U.S. healthcare practice and how the suffering of women and people of color can be made legible within that system. The quality and impact of her scholarship are demonstrated by her national public engagement. She is a dedicated instructor, offering core courses that are praised by students and faculty observers. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Abigail Dumes be promoted to the rank of associate professor of women’s and gender studies, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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