

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

Youngju Ryu, associate professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2006	University of California, Los Angeles
M.A.	2001	University of California, Los Angeles
B.A.	1998	Harvard University

Professional Record:

2021-present	Director, Nam Center for Korean Studies, University of Michigan
2014-present	Associate Professor, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan
2007-2014	Assistant Professor, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan
2007	Instructor, Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University, Korea
2006	Instructor, Academy of East Asian Studies, Sungkyunkwan University, Korea
2002-2005	Lecturer, East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of California, Los Angeles

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Ryu has single-handedly developed a range of courses on Korean literature, history, culture, and film which range from small first-year seminars on Korean popular culture through larger introductory lecture courses on Korean civilization and upper-level courses on Korean literature, culture, and film, to graduate seminars that explore the theoretical foundations of Asian studies as a field. She has shown herself to be highly effective at every level of teaching. It is of special note that Professor Ryu has pioneered a CIC course-sharing initiative, with which she has been involved from the grant-writing stage. She piloted the project to a class comprised of UM and MSU students, with half the class participating remotely via video conference. To-date, Professor Ryu has chaired the dissertation committees of a total of four department students, served as a member on three others, has co-chaired a dissertation committee in Comparative Literature, and served as a member on a total of thirteen dissertation committees outside the Department.

Research: Since her appointment, Professor Ryu has continued to focus her research on modern Korean literature and culture, an academic field that has come into being only since the late 1990s. She has won broad recognition and respect from scholars in the field, which stems from an appreciation of her wide-ranging interests, her contributions to a growing academic field, her articulateness and astuteness in addressing complex issues, and her thoughtful engagement with South Korean literature as well as recent developments in Korean-language scholarship. Early in her career, she established herself as the leading scholar of her generation in modern Korean literature. Since then, in her publication activities, Professor Ryu has maintained her focus on Korea in the twentieth century, but her work has significantly broadened in scope and taken a more interdisciplinary turn, working across the fields of film studies, popular culture, and intellectual history, as well as her original field of literature.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Cultures of Yusin: South Korea in the 1970s, editor. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018.

“The Meek Shall Inherit History: Life and Works of Song Kōn-ho.” In *Intellectuals in Dark Times*, edited by John B. Duncan and Henry Em. Under review.

“The Mad Father in the Attic: Torture and the Ethics of Accountability in Post-Authoritarian Korea.” In *Routledge Handbook of Korean Literature*, edited by Yoon Sun Yang. Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2020.

“Area Studies, East Asian Studies, and Korean Studies: Topography of Korean Studies in the United States.” In *Korean Studies Around the Globe*, edited by Shin Hae-jin. Pogosa, 2019. [In Korean]

“From Martyrdom to Apostasy: Kim Chi-ha and the Politics of Death in South Korean Democratization.” In *Beyond Death: The Politics of Suicide and Martyrdom in Korea*, edited by Charles Kim et al. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019.

Service: Since being promoted to the rank of associate professor in 2014, Professor Ryu has performed a wide range of service and leadership roles both within the university and beyond. She served two terms as the director of graduate studies (2014-15, 2016-17); a term as the associate chair (2020-21); and two terms on the department’s Executive Committee (2017-18, 2019-22); she chaired or participated in five search committees for tenure track positions and three search committees for lecturers (including the director of the Korean Language Program), and numerous lecturer reviews. She was also the director of the Korean Language Program (2016-18). Professor Ryu has been involved in many campus DEI initiatives. She has been on the steering committee for Women of Color in the Academy Project (WOCAP) and was also responsible for bringing Asian Languages and Cultures into the Michigan Humanities Emerging Research scholarship program during her second term as director of graduate studies. She has actively mentored post-doctoral fellows in the LSA Collegiate Fellows Program. In her service to the field on a national level, Professor Ryu has twice co-organized the North American Workshop on Korean Literature and served on the Executive Board of the Committee on Korean Studies of the Association for Asian Studies. She is the current director of the Nam Center for Korean Studies at the University of Michigan.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “Dr. Ryu is a leading scholar of Korean literature and a prominent cultural critic on topics such as the global Cold War, democratization, social movements, and media politics. Through her original and groundbreaking scholarship, she has had a significant impact on the fields of Korean studies, Asian studies, and cultural studies, helping to shape and transform these fields. Her strong commitment to human rights and social justice has been clearly demonstrated in her scholarship and contributions to professional societies. She has also admirably taken on the task of mentoring the next generation of scholars and students.”

Reviewer (B): “Given Prof. Ryu’s prestige and visibility, the importance of her published arguments in both U.S. and Korean contexts, and her fluency with multiple bodies of historical and theoretical scholarship, it is no surprise that she has been invited to publish and to participate in roundtables on the status of Korean Studies and area studies more broadly.”

Reviewer (C): “Accompanying the rapid increase in the number of tenure-track Korea related positions, numerous Korean studies programs have now been established at universities across North America. Professor Ryu has stood at the forefront of a growing, dynamic field. She is a leader.”

Reviewer (D): “Among her peers, she can be most closely compared to Professor Theodore Hughes at Columbia University, and I consider these two scholars to be the current leaders in the field of Korean literature and cultural studies. Dr. Ryu’s various contributions to the field of Korean Studies writ large makes her a more significant figure.”

Reviewer (E): “The closest analogs to Dr. Ryu’s profile would be Chris Hanscom at UCLA and Travis Workman at U Minnesota (both recently promoted to Full Professor), or Samuel Perry at Brown and Janet Poole at U Toronto (still Associate Professors). These are all excellent scholars and colleagues, and Dr. Ryu can hold her own against any of them, but one major difference between them and her is their reticence when it comes to stepping out into a leadership or advocacy role, especially on the South Korea-North America interface. That is, while Dr. Ryu’s scholarly output is excellent in both quality and quantity, she stands head and shoulders above these other (all ethnically non-Korean) colleagues in her various leadership roles, and especially in her willingness and ability to speak for Korean Studies more broadly in both Korea and North America.”

Reviewer (F): “Youngju Ryu is a widely acclaimed scholar on her own and, at once, an established leader of the field having deep knowledge of this academic field’s standing in the broad public sphere, past and present. Given an adequate title and position, I have no doubt that she will excel even more in the very near future.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Ryu is a leading figure in the fields of Korean literature and Korean studies. Her research is an example of committed and serious scholarship, her teaching has been wide-ranging and interdisciplinary, and she has assumed leadership roles in the department, the Nam Center, and beyond. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Youngju Ryu be promoted to the rank of professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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