

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

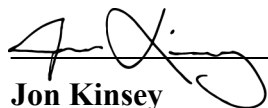
Gregg D. Crane, Ph.D., professor of English language and literature in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on December 31, 2025.

Professor Crane earned his J.D. degree from the University of California, San Francisco in 1986 and his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1995. He was appointed assistant professor of English at the University of Washington in 1995 and associate professor in 2001. After a year at Miami University of Ohio (2002-03), he came to the University of Michigan as an associate professor of English in 2004 and was promoted to professor in 2010.

Professor Crane's research has focused primarily on nineteenth-century American literature, with an emphasis on law and literature. His first book, Race, Citizenship, and Law in American Literature (2002), has been widely admired for its originality, rigor and historical breadth. It demonstrates how appeals to a "higher law" on the part of anti-slavery activists served as the catalyst for a dramatic rethinking of the law's purpose and function in the Civil War era and beyond. In opposition to the "strict constructionism" of those upholding the constitutionality of slavery, this rethinking conceived the law as a mutable human creation that retained a strong commitment to the universality of human rights as its ethical foundation. The book tells the story of how various intellectuals, from literary as well as legal circles, came together at a time of crisis to articulate a vision of the law that would be more fully answerable to the spirit of the democratic institutions it claimed to serve. Professor Crane's body of work has not only been informed by but has helped advance the revival of interest in pragmatism that has been so important to reconsiderations of American culture in the recent past. His second book, The Cambridge Introduction to the Nineteenth-Century American Novel (2007), reflects this influence in its approach to major and minor works of fiction as dramatizing the dynamics of doubt and belief in a way that undermines confidence in the reliability of moral absolutes or foundationalist thinking. The recipient of the Michigan Humanities Award (2008) and the Faculty Recognition Award (2010), Professor Crane taught many courses at the undergraduate and graduate level on a variety of topics concerning literary genres, the law, the environment, and the philosophy of pragmatism. Perhaps owing to his years as a practicing attorney before entering academia, Professor Crane's opinion has been held in high regard by his colleagues, whose delight in his candor is exceeded only by their respect for his wise counsel. After a stint as graduate chair in the English Department, he served as director of the Program in the Environment from 2013 to 2018, a pivotal period of growth for the unit, which, thanks to his efforts, saw a significant increase in faculty involvement among various departments within the college together with an increase in student enrollments.

The Regents now salute this distinguished scholar and teacher by naming **Gregg D. Crane, professor emeritus of English language and literature**.

Requested by:



Jon Kinsey
Vice President and Secretary of the University

November 2025