

SELF-EVALUATION: [REDACTED]
Promotion to Full Professor

This is my tenth year at the rank of Associate Professor at MSU, and my achievements--the publication of a second book on culture wars in Latin America during the Cold War and after, of the two scholarly editions published on Latin American literature of the nineteenth century, and of the articles and book contributions which have appeared in reputable venues, the securing of research and teaching grants, the continued success of the courses I teach, the number and quality of the doctoral dissertations I have directed to completion, the success of my advisees in securing tenure track positions under a challenging job market, and the level of service provided to the profession, to my Department and other units on campus—all point to a solid and sustained intellectual career of the sort described in the bylaws of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese as sufficient for promotion to the Full Professorship. What follows is a self-assessment of my achievements in research, teaching and service during the period under evaluation.

RESEARCH: I am a Latin Americanist with a specialization in intellectual and literary history. An important part of my research explores how cultural agents (mainly journals, foundations, and other symbolic clearing houses or taste makers) intervene in the intellectual field during moments of transition and/or reorganization of peripheral cultures such as that of Latin America. In other words, my work focuses on culture wars that (more often than not) take place when an established horizon of literary beliefs or assumptions is debunked or replaced by a new set of beliefs or “empty signifiers” [REDACTED] defines this kind of universals). For this reason I tend to read the “outskirts” of literature by addressing my attention to the conditions and dispositions under which a given period values (or not) certain texts and classifies them as “literature.” Questions related to canon formation, and the making of taste, values and reputation are at the forefront of my reading of Latin American cultures in context.

My second book, Nombres en litigio. Las guerras culturales en América Latina: del happening desarrollista a la posguerra fría [REDACTED] is a study of the quest for legitimacy of Latin American literature and how such a process was impacted by political and economic changes over the second half of the twentieth century. Through the analysis of what I considered key agents in the cultural field, I set out to assess the effects of the great divide that took place from the Cold War years (when political agendas virtually dominated the public discourse) to the hegemony of neoliberalism in the Post Cold War era (when the market became the only measure of what was considered successful). I conclude that the relative autonomy of the cultural sphere so often claimed (or uncritically assumed) by readers and writers alike is—to say the least—questionable. What my analysis shows is that the behavior of culture in peripheral contexts cannot be dissociated from economic and political forms of determination. This book-length project grew through its different stages thanks to the support of internal and extramural grants, including AURIG, NEH, and a HARP-Production award. My interest in the emergence of Latin American liberalism is a relatively new trend in my research, and can be traced back to teaching a graduate seminar on “Colonial/(Post)Colonial Discourses in nineteenth century Latin America.” In this area I have published two scholarly editions [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A third edition of [REDACTED] is under contract by Stockcero. Another ongoing book project, provisionally entitled Imagining Patagonia, arises from this niche of expertise. Patagonia has inspired fruitful fantasies, but it is my intention in this monograph to unveil the unacknowledged consistency shown by the Argentine state in casting it as a jail or space of punishment and political exile. Imagined first as an “Argentine Australia,” Patagonia soon earned the infamous reputation of an Argentine Siberia. During tumultuous periods of national history the list of incarcerated people and political “exiles” grew to include a long and inclusive record of displaced indigenous groups, Italian anarchists, radicals, Peronists, “terrorists,” and (last but not least) two former presidents who fell from grace. From this point of view, Patagonia becomes a pretext for discussing state fantasies of incarceration at a contested intersection of political and symbolic meanings. What I call “Patagonian cartographies of pain and penalty” raises an interesting set of theoretical issues which have been only recently discussed, leaving a significant gap in this area especially when it comes to the analysis of Argentine culture. My book project fills this gap, and, more specifically, addresses questions of

cultural hegemony, and the political and economic determinations of State fantasies with which these questions can be associated.

TEACHING: Since my promotion to Associate Professor, I have taught and designed traditional and non-traditional courses at the undergraduate level and at the graduate level on Canon Formation and the representation of Otherness in Modern Latin America, Borges, Latin American intellectual history, Popular Culture and Colonial/(Post)Colonial Discourses Latin America, among others.

Keeping my courses up to date has been another goal I set for myself as a teacher. Last year I participated in the College of Arts and Letters Blended Teaching Community, an intensive series of seminars that provided me with the tools and the knowledge to meaningfully incorporate technology into my undergraduate courses. Currently all my classes have benefited from the effective use of active learning through a balanced integration of technology in daily class activities.

To judge from SIRS evaluations and my students' learning responses, I considered myself to be an effective instructor. I felt specially flattered when graduate students wrote that one of my achievements in a seminar on Latin American canon and canonicity had been "to make them think outside the box." In addition to teaching scheduled courses, I have also worked closely with students in Independent Studies (to date I have conducted a total of 28 independent studies), and Undergraduate Senior Theses (I have directed 13 theses). But there is nothing I have enjoyed and derive more satisfaction from than directing Ph.D. dissertations to completion and helping our graduate students to navigate and succeed in their search for a teacher/scholar position in today's challenging job market. During the period under evaluation I have directed a total of eight doctoral dissertations and served as a reader in another nine dissertation committees. All of my doctoral students have been very successful in securing tenure track positions in competitive institutions.

SERVICE: Since my arrival at MSU, I have been deeply involved in the Department and College administrative life. In 2002 we became the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and as an associate professor (in a unit that had only four senior colleagues) I actively participated in all the tasks related to such a step. I think that my status as a Hispanic woman has been a factor in my representation of the Department on college and university committees, which has made these ten years at MSU intensely active at the service level. Among my major achievements in this area, I chaired the Department Advisory Committee twice for two-year tenures (2004-06 and 2006-08) leading bylaws revisions, proposing policy changes, and conducting annual peer evaluations, six reappointments and three tenure cases. I also chaired the Departmental Graduate Affairs Committee and served as Graduate Advisor and as a representative to the College Graduate Affairs Committee (2006-08). My goals while serving in graduate affairs were threefold: 1) to increase communication between students and faculty; 2) to make the necessary changes to the admission process and recruitment mechanism to get better graduate students, sooner, and more competitive to secure financial assistance at the university level, and 3) to design a new Ph.D. exam that would make this instrument more consistent with the Program's goals and the challenging conditions of today's profession. I also participated in the searches of Assistant Professors and Chair conducted by our Department, chairing four search committees which successfully led to the hiring of top candidates in their fields.

I perceive myself as an advocate for cross-cultural and global understanding and MSU has provided an ideal environment in which to make my trajectory through the professorate meaningful and challenging. I have advanced both in my individual scholarly career and as the Latin American representative to various programs on campus. During all these years, I have consistently published new pieces of scholarship and participated in national and international conferences. At this stage, it is extremely rewarding to be recognized by colleagues who praise what I have done, quote my work in their own research, and invite me to participate in special editions and conferences alike. My courses receive excellent evaluations and higher enrollments each year. I have served my Department as well as other programs on campus. I am working on three new projects—a third monograph, and two scholarly editions. I would like, nevertheless, to do more. Challenging issues at various levels (including community work, an area in which I have not done as much as I hoped) constitute my agenda for future years. My promotion to full professorship would confer a sense of rightness on my chosen path, and would strength my long standing commitment to the institution, to students and to the study of Latin America.