

Application Related Information

Application: Application Verified
Grad Program Applying To: MPA

Iteration Name: 202410_GR_G
Program Name: MPA

Recommendation Information

Recommended By: Kathleen Eamon
Recommenders Institution: The Evergreen State College

Recommenders Title: Member of the Faculty

Contact Name: Manuel Aybar

Waive Access to Recommendation Ltrs: I choose to waive my right to review this recommendation.

Recommendation Waiver Choice:

Recommendation Form Submitted: ✓

Recommendation Status: Received

Received Date: 01/18/2023 09:45 AM

Recommender Assessment: I recommend this applicant without reservation.

Recommendation Type: General

Recommender Form: MPA Letter of Recommendation/Form

Recommendation Entity ID: 1024000108963022

Recommendation Owner: Josephine Bernier

Recommender Form Questions

How long have you known applicant:

Applicant ability as self-directed learner: Manuel has such a deep experiential and theoretical background to draw on that he is an excellent self-directed learner; really grounding that work in one anchor point, given all of those riches, is probably the most difficult part of that task for him, but he is focusing all of his energies on tackling that aspect of his research and project work right now.

Five months

Time since last contact with applicant:

Applicant as productive member of group: Manuel works very well with others, and his background in administration helps him frame that work and distribute and monitor roles.

1 day

Relationship with Applicant: Instructor

Applicant most significant strengths: Please see my letter.

Ability to complete rigorous grad program: Outstanding

Responsibility/reliability: Outstanding

Communication Skills - Oral: Outstanding

Communication skills - written: Very Good

Service Orientation-sensitivity/empathy: Outstanding

Ability to work independently: Outstanding

Ability to handle stress: Very Good

Ability to think critically: Excellent

Ability to analyze/problem solve: Excellent

Ability to think creatively: Outstanding

Openness to feedback: Excellent

Potential for leadership: Outstanding

Ability to work in a team: Excellent

Personal/professional
reflection: Outstanding

Description Information

Description:

Form URL: <https://evergreenstatecollege.radiu>

Other Information

Created Time: 01/17/2023 09:18 PM

Created By: Josephine Bernier

Modified Time: 01/18/2023 09:45 AM

Modified By: Josephine Bernier



January 3, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am excited to be writing in strong support of Manuel Aybar's application to pursue his Master in Public Administration here at Evergreen. Manuel is a genuinely incredible person, both intellectually and otherwise, and he will bring a real trove of unparalleled experience forward into his advanced academic work and career. Manny has a strong background in administration already, with governmental and non-profit work, not to mention arts administration in his work as a conductor. But I also want to speak to his broad theoretical interests and academic capabilities. He arrived at Evergreen this year ready to engage on all fronts, with serious dedication and enthusiasm, problem-solving capacities, and an uncanny ability to toggle between research and learning and teaching. I have never before had such a knowledgeable and experienced student who also remains totally socially, intellectually, and aesthetically curious and engaged, so generous with other students, or so adept at making the most of each opportunity, from office hours to advising sessions to opportunities to take on leadership roles.

I have taught the philosophy of art and aesthetics, critical theory, and psychoanalysis at Evergreen for seventeen years, and I am currently working closely with Manuel in the two-quarter, full-time program called *Marx's Capital: Capital, Crypto-, and the Mystery of Money*. We have completed the first quarter of this program and are on to our second. So far, together, we have read, talked about, written on, and responded to the first half of Marx's *Capital*, vol. I, alongside key texts in the history of philosophy like Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The program has been demanding in its breadth, moving from political economy and philosophy to contemporary literary, critical, and aesthetic theory, taking up in various modes themes of commodity fetishism, use value and exchange value, Marx's labor theory of value, Marx's monetary theory, and the battles over the length of the working day. In addition, we kept our attention trained on current trends in the financial-tech landscape and scholarship surrounding it. We pursued value theory not just in economic but also aesthetic realms like art and popular culture.

Manuel is an exceptional thinker, reader, and interlocutor who made the most of every opportunity to develop and demonstrate analytical, aesthetic, and interpretive skills across our demanding syllabus of readings and lectures and our wide-ranging theoretical and creative assignments. His excellent attendance, lively engagement in all sessions, and care with and submission of all assignments spoke to an almost unparalleled level of engagement. In all program discussions, from small groups to seminars to big lectures, Manny listened attentively and participated with equal parts enthusiasm and respect, not to mention a welcome dose of humor, all of which contributed so much to our becoming a community of inquiry.

In my experience, few students move as gracefully as he does between close reading, philosophical analysis, broad synthetic discussions, topical conversations about current events, and playful and funny imaginative projects. At one point, Manuel graciously agreed to introduce a visiting artist in our Art Lecture Series (a public

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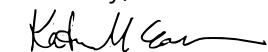
series of talks with broad attendance), and it was one of the most compelling, generous, and engaging introductions I have seen in my years attending that series. Manuel also engaged with successfully with contemporary resources reflecting on, analyzing, and arguing about the emergent and rapidly changing fields within financial and other blockchain technologies. As part of our research collectives, Manny helped organize a group that studied and reflected on mainstream media, fake news, peer review in research, and research strategies, working as a great member of our research collective to articulate and refine discussion questions, track major themes, and understand the basic terms of the current debates about crypto-currencies and blockchain technologies. When we went on a multi-day field-trip to Seattle, Manny took on a leadership role both in terms of helping move the 18 of us to and through the city but also modeling exemplary engagement with the curators and docents we met.

As I mentioned to start, Manuel brings an incredible breadth of interests and experience to his academic and creative work, from time in the seminary to analytic training to work in housing administration, not to mention conducting orchestras, working in media, and his experiences in Nicaragua and as an émigré. For someone else, that kind of a resume might lead to knowingness and a kind of resistance to new modes of engagement, but for Manuel it is decidedly the other way around. Manuel is sensitive to all that is on offer in the rough ground of a given text, as well as to the big questions of social, political, and cultural importance. In his academic development, he is still working to bridge the analytical and interpretive skills that come with that orientation to his systemic and ethical thinking. And he is experimenting with some lay autoethnographic approaches to the task; this quarter ended, for example, with a synthesis essay called "Aesthetic Junction: What's Your Function?" that took its cue from Manuel's experience being assigned public mural detail in Nicaragua to orient research into Arendt's account of labor, work, and action, working to bridge the gap between materialist history and the psychology and philosophy of art and more.

Manuel is also always willing to experiment with new approaches and use creative engagement to unsettle his thinking, and then to put in the work to refine the experiment into a proper project. For the playful final assignment in fall quarter, which asked students to develop an imaginary entity or concern that 'trades' in some form of value of personal, social, or historical interest, Manuel designed a creative thought-entity called VibeGeist Media, an imaginary production company responsible for his imaginary hit TV series "My Friend Karl." Manuel developed an entire web site for the project, wrote a funny and compelling script for the pilot episode of "My Friend Karl," and gave a compelling, scripted, and confident presentation of the work to the program as a whole. It was a lovely ending to a quarter of excellent and exciting work.

It is my privilege to get to work with Manuel Aybar on all of this and more, and I can't wait to see where his intellectual, analytical, and aesthetic gifts take him next. He is perfectly positioned to make the most of his graduate opportunities, and I can say from our joyful experience together that both the program and the cohort he joins will gain greatly by his presence. I give him my highest recommendation, without reservation.

Sincerely,



Dr. Kathleen Eamon

Member of the Faculty, The Evergreen State College