

Dr. [REDACTED]
Languages, Literatures and Cultures
[REDACTED]
Muhlenberg College

May 6, 2014

Members of the Writing Program Committee

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing this letter in support of [REDACTED]'s petition to count FRN 413 (19th-Century French Literature) as a W course.

[REDACTED] took FRN 413 in Fall 2013 and received an A for the class. Successful completion of the course requires three analytical papers and a group research project. Students are given the opportunity to review their papers but they are not required to do so. [REDACTED] reviewed all three of her papers after meeting with me and discussing her writing at length. She wrote a total of 18 pages (in French) of which she reviewed 13.

In her first paper, [REDACTED] juxtaposed time's linearity in Chateaubriand's *René* to its cyclical nature in George Sand's *The Devil's Pool* arguing that linear time and the inevitability of death trap and ultimately immobilize Chateaubriand's romantic hero whereas Sand's German is able to transcend a number of difficulties thanks to his naïve but powerful acceptance of time's circularity. Her initial reading of *René* was somewhat unoriginal and her thesis statement not quite fully articulated. She improved upon both these points in her second draft raising her grade from a B+ to an A-. Her second paper was a study of language in Balzac's *Old Goriot*. She argued that although Eugène de Rastignac, the novel's protagonist, and Vautrin, his antagonist and double, speak or write to achieve apparently different goals, they both use excessive language laying thus bare the extent to which their pursuits are similar. In her second draft, [REDACTED] better articulated her thesis statement and ridded her text of a distracting focus on use of excessive language by other characters in the novel improving her grade from a B+ to an A-. [REDACTED] third essay was a study of snow as a metaphor for silence in Maupassant's *Boule de Suif*. In particular, [REDACTED] argued that snow's omnipresence in the story mirrors the ineluctability of reliving in silence ineffable war memories. Her initial definitions of "memory" and "emotion" were lacking in precision thus weakening her argument. Her rewrite addressed my concerns ultimately raising her grade from an A- to an A.

[REDACTED]'s contribution to the group research project was significant. Her group worked on the industrial revolution in France, and [REDACTED], in particular, researched and discussed the relationship between the industrial revolution and the emergence of the Romantic Hero in France. Her work was excellent and her contributions to the group project essential. The entire group was awarded an A.

██████████ is an excellent reader of literary and cultural texts and a very accomplished writer. She knows how to read texts closely and how to tease meaning out of them. She knows how to articulate a thesis statement, how to organize her thoughts, how to transition from one point to the next and how to reach and articulate a conclusion. Her paragraphs are cohesive, her analysis never loses sight of the thesis statement and her argument's "how" and "so what" are effectively driven to a convincing conclusion. She knows how to draw support from the text she is discussing and she knows how to integrate and engage a quote. Most importantly, she understands that writing is a multi-stage process and she seeks out well-informed interlocutors whose comments, questions and ideas will help her improve upon what is already very good quality work.

I believe that the writing ██████████ completed for FRN 413 is equivalent (if not more advanced) than what she would have been required to complete for FRN 304 (Advanced French Conversation and Composition)—the French Program's only W course. I, therefore, fully support her petition to have FRN 413 count as a W course.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

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