

Application Related Information

Application: Application Incomplete
Grad Program Applying To: MES

Iteration Name: 202510_GR_G
Program Name: MES

Recommendation Information

Recommended By: Therese Saliba
Recommenders Institution: Evergreen
Waive Access to Recommendation Ltrs: I do not waive my right to review this recommendation.
Recommendation Form Submitted: ✓

Recommenders Title: Faculty, Feminist Studies
Contact Name: Cassandra Shaffer
Recommendation Waiver Choice:
Recommendation Status: Received

Received Date: 06/14/2024 09:23 AM
Recommendation Type: General
Recommendation Entity ID: 1024000118844162

Recommender Assessment: I recommend this applicant.
Recommender Form: Letter of Recommendation
Recommendation Owner: Josephine Bernier

Recommender Form Questions

How long have you known applicant:	Applicant ability as self-directed learner:
Time since last contact with applicant:	Applicant as productive member of group:
Relationship with Applicant:	Applicant most significant strengths:
Ability to complete rigorous grad program:	Responsibility/reliability:
Communication Skills - Oral:	Communication skills - written:
Service Orientation-sensitivity/empathy:	Ability to work independently:
Ability to handle stress:	Ability to think critically:
Ability to analyze/problem solve:	Ability to think creatively:
Openness to feedback:	Potential for leadership:
Ability to work in a team:	Personal/professional reflection:

Description Information

Description:

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

Other Information

Created Time: 06/01/2024 01:40 AM
Modified Time: 06/14/2024 09:23 AM

Created By: Josephine Bernier
Modified By: Josephine Bernier



Dear MES Selection Committee:

I am pleased to offer Cassandra Shaffer my strong recommendation to your program, for she is a bright student with extensive international experience and a commitment to refugee rights and environmental justice. I worked closely with Cassandra in Fall 2017 and Winter 2018 on an Independent Learning Contract on *Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. A highly self-motivated learner, Cassandra took full initiative in planning and executing her course of study. This very ambitious, well-designed contract demonstrated Cassandra's ability to integrate the theory and practice of Refugee and Forced Migration studies with French language studies while immersed first in Montreal culture and intellectual life, and later in NGO work with refugees in Paris. Over two quarters, Cassandra effectively combined her engagement with related community events in French language studies and political/environmental studies. She also developed a proposal for a winter project, "Refugee Children's Learning Garden," combining research on refugees, climate change, and bioremediation to empower residents in refugee camps. Her final portfolio was excellent and conveyed depth of personal, intellectual, and creative engagement with her studies.

Cassandra is a very strong writer, with creative insights and advanced skills in theoretical and integrative analysis. Her well written reading response papers on the *Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration* (700 pages) effectively demonstrated increasing understanding of the history, political theory, and ethical debates that have defined the field, and underscore the imperative to connect academic knowledge with ethical action. Highlighting the 65.6 million displaced persons in 2017, Cassandra lays out a clear analysis of methodological approaches and interpretive frameworks, distinctions between refugees and migrants, and questions of agency, as well as how oral history provides an important understanding of "humanity's story," particularly when "1 in every 113 people is a refugee or forced migrant."

In fall, Cassandra's thoroughly researched final essay (12 pages with 43 sources) examined the problematics of the nation-state and the theoretical underpinnings of the "refugee and forced migration complex." She begins with the important question of what it would mean to create a system of government that protects and includes everyone, then puts forth refugees as the "vanguard of history" (Arendt) and "representative of the theories we have built our society upon." With theoretical sophistication, Cassandra integrates a broad range of philosophical writings (Arendt, Descartes, Nietzsche, Foucault, Agamben, etc.) to examine the production of the refugee as non-citizen, and how the nation-state system has led to the commodification of rights and the

decrease of individual choices in the face of state authority and the delusion of state protection. She convincingly asserts that this is a political issue, rooted in the construction of borders, citizenship and refugees as commodities within the nation-state, capitalist system. Cassandra also critiques the scapegoating of refugees as an imagined threat to national security, as well as the savior mentality of Western states that cast this as a humanitarian rather than political issue. This excellent essay persuasively argues for solutions that imagine community beyond the nation-state framework, avoid the division of assistance and protection, and move away from welfare to livelihood choices for displaced peoples.

In winter, Cassandra aimed to work with refugee populations in Paris, focusing on how environmentalism can be applied to the refugee situation. Although she had to revise initial plans, she visited a few camps, completed extensive research on bioremediation processes, and wrote a very informative "Introduction to Bioremediation and Environmental Toxins" which went through careful revision and could be publishable, with minor revisions. It successfully makes difficult scientific topics accessible to a broad audience.

Cassandra's senior thesis, entitled "Decarbonizing through Global Partnerships with Displaced Communities" was an impressive 38 pages with over 40 sources. This eloquently written essay makes a powerful case for the refugee crisis and climate change as intertwined global challenges, and argues for applying multi-disciplinary, preventative approaches and green innovation to remediate landscapes and empower forced migrants. Cassandra begins by placing refugees at the forefront of climate change impacts and unpacks the concept of "climate apartheid" to expose its disproportionate violence on the global South, with human rights concerns from food insecurity, armed conflict, and dwindling resources and habitable spaces. She highlights inspiring programs from environmental activists in the global South that counter the impacts of climate change, and considers a variety of policy stakeholders, from international governments, to NGOs and migrant peoples, asserting a positive solution through collaborative work remediating landscapes to provide "biodiversity, sustainable livelihoods and economic stimulus." In particular, she points to The Lemon Tree Trust (UK) as an example of innovative approaches to "greening refugee camps" and empowering refugees. Cassandra then provides an informative overview of international environmental policy focusing on the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreements, with incisive critique of carbon trading schemes, arguing for the need to act in "universal solidarity" and with environmentally sound structural changes for the preservation of the planet. She provides statistical data on CO2 levels, degrees of change, crop yield and projections of mass extinction; but she also asserts how communities can be

empowered through indigenous wisdom and carbon sequestration practices that may restructure our individual and collective value system around the continuation of human and other life on the planet. Her last section maps the scientific processes and regenerative potentials of bioremediation technologies and how these common, cost-effective practices can be applied world-wide as a regenerative solution that offers a better quality of life for all. Cassandra concludes with insights that link biodiversity, human diversity, and the globalizing impacts of climate change with an understanding of colonial legacies, arguing that this lethal global threat, as a great equalizer, should lead us towards collective action in preservation of the planet. Overall, the essay is well researched, deeply informative, and eloquently written, synthesizing human right, ecological, and policy perspectives with environmental activism to provide a sophisticated analysis and action plan for our global future, if we are willing to act.

In conclusion, I learned an immense amount working with Cassandra, particularly at the critical intersections of refugee studies and environmental studies. When I last spoke with her, she was pursuing masters work at an experimental institution in Spain. Her work with me demonstrated excellent writing, sophisticated analysis, impressive depth of research, and graduate-level skills in political theoretical and environmental critique. With her depth of research and experiential knowledge, I am confident that Cassandra will be an asset to your program and bring a valuable international perspective to your cohort.

Sincerely,
Therese Saliba, Ph.D., Faculty of International Feminism