

Application Related Information

Application:	Application Incomplete	Iteration Name:	202430_GR_G
Grad Program Applying To:	MIT	Program Name:	MIT

Recommendation Information

Recommended By:	Julie Russo	Recommenders Title:	Professor
Recommenders Institution:	The Evergreen State College	Contact Name:	Brittany Grabianowski
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:	09/01/2023 09:42 AM	Recommender Assessment:	I recommend this applicant without reservation.
Recommendation Type:	General	Recommender Form:	Letter of Recommendation
Recommendation Entity ID:	1024000110283438	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.radius
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Other Information

Created Time:	08/04/2023 12:25 AM	Created By:	Josephine Bernier
Modified Time:	09/01/2023 09:42 AM	Modified By:	Josephine Bernier



Julie Levin Russo, Member of the Faculty

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September 1, 2023

Dear Admissions Committee,

I am writing to strongly recommend Brittany Grabianowski for the Master in Teaching program. Brittany was my student during the 2022-2023 academic year in the 8-credit classes *Power Games: Identity and the Social Imagination in Game Studies and Design* and *Video Remix Theory and Practice*. As you know, Evergreen programs like this integrate multiple fields and methodologies. *Power Games* linked critical interrogation of representation and power in video and board games with applied work in board game design. *Video Remix* likewise emphasized connecting theory and practice; we studied the diverse forms of this phenomenon and their online (or earlier) contexts, covering important frameworks for understanding media aesthetics, genres, communicative strategies, and cultures.

Brittany was an exemplary student - one of the best I have ever worked with in terms of positive contributions to our community through her diligence, engagement, candor, and warm and supportive demeanor toward others. When it came to class activities, Brittany was consistently involved in seminars, and often shared generative questions and insightful contributions that moved our conversations forward. Brittany's strong participation spanned both large and small group discussions, and she showed leadership in connecting the texts, screenings, and larger issues and themes in the programs. Brittany's assignments documented good critical reading ability by identifying key concepts (with citations) and integrating these in interesting commentaries. She followed guidelines carefully, using clearly constructed and straightforward writing, and used the opportunity to relate the texts and topics to original ideas and questions. For example, in an essay about *Sushi Go Party*, Brittany offered specific observations about multiple aspects of the game that make it an excellent educational tool and an inspiration for game mechanics. It was a pleasure to hear Brittany's comprehensive and well-prepared presentation covering all this and more. Throughout, Brittany also engaged meaningfully with questions of how games and media represent, explore, and question social identities and systems.

Overall, Brittany proved to be an interested, active, and increasingly skilled learner, very successfully applying in particular three strategies important for maximizing learning: completing preparatory work including readings, asking and researching for clarification and information, and requesting and acting on responses to work completed. She showed strong collegial and collaborative skills and effective capacities for insightful analysis and for planning and carrying out complex tasks. Creative studio work in *Power Games* was focused on design process, idea development, prototyping, peer support and feedback, iteration and revision, and effectively

documenting all of the above. Brittany's studio work evidenced strong capacities for planning, focused effort, and willingness to work hard to achieve a desired result. She actively engaged in small group work and was a valued and active member of a successful design support pod, and she also demonstrated a strong capacity to use independent studio time productively. Similarly, Brittany came to *Video Remix* as a student making a digital video for the first time, and her progress was remarkable as a result of a determination to master new skills and overcome new challenges, including the intimidating quality of the unfamiliar software and processes. Brittany also engaged seriously with critique, and she made several effective refinements between the rough draft and final version of the creative project in response to feedback. All the associated writing assignments were complete, documenting a capacity to articulate the personal inspirations, aesthetic strategies, and intended impact of this work.

The fall game design project in *Power Games* focused on acquisition and application of what designer Eric Zimmerman terms game-associated "systems literacy," including the associated process-based problem solving and collaborative skills. Brittany designed a very well-executed math learning game for children - in Brittany's words, "a multilateral competition game where each player is competing against one another... to obtain numbers and math symbols to create math equations." One playtester noted that the game was "very well thought-out. The mechanics mesh well with the objective and players have plenty of actions available." Brittany's very effective layout skills were evident in the graphic design of the board, cards, and box, as well. The game rules document was also exceptionally well-accomplished, with clear and concise writing and the use of images of game components and example plays. Awareness of player experience helped shape design decisions for the game, and Brittany's production and useful organization of both qualitative and quantitative playtest data was noteworthy. In her reflection on the process of conducting four playtests and making three game prototypes, Brittany noted that repeated playtesting was vital to realization of the goal to "make math fun."

I can't emphasize enough that Brittany brought to these programs a commitment to learning and a willingness to take risks in trying new things. I saw her confidence in class content, and in her own skills and voice, grow greatly over the course of the year. Brittany attended and participated reliably and completed every single assignment on time. From the outset, she was clear that her goal was to become a teacher, and she brought that lens to games and media as educational and communication systems. I'm confident that Brittany has the dedication and drive to excel as a Master in Teaching student, and I urge you to give her application your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Russo", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Julie Levin Russo