



Recommendation for Aarush Jugdar

It is with great pleasure that I write to recommend Aarush Jugdar, a highly motivated, socially conscious, and conscientious student. As an instructor of American Studies at the North Carolina School of Science and Math, I had the privilege of teaching Aarush during Fall 2024 semester. American Studies at the North Carolina School of Science and Math is an unusual high school course. Students earn credit for both American literature and American history in this two-semester, double-credit course sequence. Students in this core humanities class take an interdisciplinary approach to studying the past. In examining voices from history, students develop an understanding of the socio-political issues that are most important to our current era, and in turn, they develop empathetic and ethical ways of engaging as citizens and community members.

Throughout the semester, I was impressed with Aarush's commitment to improving his writing. His attentiveness and resilience were evident in his proactive engagement with the writing process. He frequently sought feedback on his drafts and made effective use of writing conferences to discuss his ideas. During our meetings, it became clear that he held himself to high standards, as he displayed a keen attentiveness to constructive criticism. His understanding of writing as a recursive and process-oriented endeavor was impressive for a high school student. For instance, after our discussions on the Puritan Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, Aarush returned with expanded ideas that delved deeper into the complexities of Rowlandson's text, particularly her use of contradictions and biases. His ability to connect these themes to broader discussions about historical narratives demonstrated an intellectual maturity that is rare among his peers. And indeed, he continued to work on this paper this current semester and sought my feedback yet again, as he decided to make this essay part of some of his college application materials.

Aarush's curiosity about the world around him is another trait that defines him. After we studied the Indian Removal Act, his interest in the Cherokee people's history led him to ask insightful questions in class about the current state of the Cherokee Nation. This prompted me to augment my lessons with additional information about the three different federally-recognized Cherokee Nations and how women's leadership remains central to Cherokee culture. In other words, Aarush's curiosity not only prompted engaging discussions among his classmates, but helped me see how I could make the course content more relevant to modern-day society. His initiative to seek out additional information and connect historical events to contemporary issues reflects his proactive approach to learning and his desire to uncover the complexities of history.

Similarly, during our debate on the contrasting ideals of Jonathan Winthrop and Thomas Jefferson, Aarush's ability to articulate the nuances of both perspectives showcased his critical thinking skills and his capacity to engage with complex ideas. After our class debate, Aarush built on the ideas he put forth about Winthrop and Jefferson by applying their ideas to primary source documents about an early 19th-century mill worker protest essay in Lowell, MA. His resulting essay was a testament to his ability to produce high-quality work that reflects nuanced analysis and a deep understanding of the subject matter. In this essay, Aarush not only examined the paradox between Jefferson's ideals of individual liberty and Winthrop's vision of collective unity but also delved into the historical context surrounding the Lowell Mill women's struggles. He skillfully navigated various sources and perspectives, demonstrating his critical thinking capabilities and his commitment to presenting a nuanced argument.

He also worked with peer feedback on his argument, which demonstrated his openness and willingness to take risks. He was resistant to taking his peer's advice at first, but eventually came around to his peer's idea, a very simple fix for a complex problem in Aarush's paper. Aarush concluded he was resistant because he hadn't thought of this simple fix and this had hurt his ego. Once he recognized this, he was quite willing to take his peer's feedback and incorporate it into his paper. Through this example, Aarush demonstrated introspection and maturity. It also shows how he is willing to take risks and push himself outside of his comfort zone when his work calls for it. All of these traits will surely serve him well in the future.

Aarush carries his energy for academics into his service work. He has found the time and energy to commit to leading multiple high school organizations. He is co-president of the Young Investors Society, Vice President of the North Central Regional HOSA, and co-President of the NCSSM Pre-Med Club. In his leadership for all of these organizations, he exemplifies his commitment to teamwork and his ability to motivate others. For instance, in the fall semester, Aarush was involved in a "Stock the Shelves" initiative where he not only educated his peers about financial literacy but also engaged the community in addressing food insecurity. His ability to connect financial concepts with social responsibility enriched the experience for everyone involved and sparked meaningful discussions among his peers.

Still, his dedication to community service surpasses that of many people his age. Aarush has spent more than 500 hours volunteering with neurodivergent individuals. Drawing on his volunteering experiences, he developed *Glow*, a behavior-logging app for that facilitates communication between parents and therapists. His ability to see the way that technology can grow from and facilitate empathetic interactions is nothing short of extraordinary. He also brings this extraordinary empathy when he volunteers on a weekly basis as an EMT. His experiences on these calls has further deepened his understanding of trust and care in service, illustrating his commitment to both community and compassion.

Overall, Aarush's commitment to service and cultivating community not only reflect his academic strengths but also highlight his potential to inspire and lead others in meaningful interactions. For all of these reasons, Aarush has been a pleasure to teach. I have no doubt that he will find success in whatever program is lucky enough to have him. His insightfulness, commitment to his education, and ability to respond to constructive feedback make him an exceptional member of our classroom community. I highly recommend Aarush for any opportunity he seeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Amanda Moulder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Amanda Moulder, Ph.D.

Instructor of American Studies and Humanities

Department of Humanities

North Carolina School of Science and Math

