

Mr. Francis  
SHS English Department

Letters of Recommendation:  
updated for the Class of 2017

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- Preliminary Remarks -

**Disclaimer:** The following details my expectations for students seeking a letter of recommendation for college admissions.

**Request Process:** Most commitments to write college recommendations are made in spring of the student's junior year.

Students who meet one of the following criteria should approach me in February or March of their junior year:

- exceptional students I have already taught for two semesters in European Literature
- students who performed exceedingly well in my class during the fall semester of their junior year and have a new English teacher for the spring

Students who meet the following criterion should approach me in May or June of their junior year:

- students who performed exceedingly well in my class during the spring semester of their junior year

The following only applies to students for whom I have already agreed to write a recommendation.

**My Philosophy:** In agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for you, I commit to representing you--in writing--to the institution(s) that you will apply to for admission. I make this commitment because you have demonstrated to me your dedication to your own education, especially in the area of language arts. Our goal is to help you find the institution that will meet your individual academic and non-academic needs.

You must remember that my efforts on your behalf stem wholly from my desire to assist you, as my job does not require me to write recommendations for any students. Also keep in mind that I will be similarly engaged in assisting other students. Most importantly, I have the needs of my current students to meet. Therefore, it is paramount that you do your utmost to facilitate this process. The more each student helps his or her own cause, the more satisfied I and all of my students will be with the results.

**Your Obligations:** Your most important responsibility is to stay in contact with me. Please meet with me face-to-face. If I do not respond to an e-mail message within two days, please send a second message and then find me the following school day. Do not leave notes or materials in my mailboxes.

Research your choices carefully and assiduously: This is an important decision, and information is your strongest ally. Take advantage of all of your resources and keep an open mind.

Please notify me immediately of any application deadlines other than January 1. Unless I have acknowledged an earlier deadline, assume that my goal is to have your letter prepared by mid-December.

Each student soliciting a recommendation must complete a comprehensive letter detailing a personal evaluation:

- Personal Evaluation -

**Rationale:** The more detailed my recommendation is, the stronger it will be. Your personal evaluation should be concrete and specific. In a typed letter, address the following:

- Make specific references to your time in my class, reminding me of specific contributions you made during discussion and specific paper topics for completed assignments.
- Remind me with which groups you were involved for specific projects and detail your specific contributions for each project.
- Include any aspects that you want emphasized (e.g., creativity, maturity, commitment), based upon the criteria set by the institution(s) to which you seek admission or by me.
- Tell me how your interest and performance in my class compares with other courses you have taken or subjects you have studied.
- Inform me of any interests or activities outside of my class that might be relevant in my letter that are not addressed elsewhere in your application

Do not assume that I will remember or be aware of the most specific response to any of these items. Expect the quality of my letter to be a direct reflection of the quality of your personal evaluation.

After you have completed your personal evaluation, carefully follow these directions:

- Save the file in rich-text format (.rtf), with a filename that makes it distinctive to you:  
(e.g., `firstname_lastname_personal_evaluation.rtf`)
- Print a hardcopy to hand to me.
- Copy and paste your evaluation into the body of an e-mail message, attach the saved file to this message, and send it `mr.hfrancis@gmail.com`

If the evaluation is not completed by the established deadline, I will assume you have found another adult to write your recommendation and will drop you from my list of candidates.

- Miscellany -

**Deadlines:** You have my permission to hound me ruthlessly as your deadlines approach.

**QuestBridge:** Please notify me by the end of the school year if you plan to pursue a QuestBridge match. As the deadline is late September, my letter needs to be in its final stages by the end of June.

**Naviance:** Once I have agreed to write your letter, do not forget to invite me to submit letters through Naviance, etc. Please be aware that Naviance is not foolproof, so you should be in contact with your college advisor and guidance counselor.

- Post Script -

Do not forget to inform me of the results. Students applying for early decision or early action should meet with me face-to-face soon after they have been contacted regarding the decision. All students should meet with me at least once to tell me their final decision. There is no reason to be shy or inconsiderate about this simple request. It is exciting for me to know where you will be next year!

I look forward to being part of this process with you. Good luck with your senior year.

05/16