**To students from my class: What reference letters to expect from me?**

December 10, 2019

In general, I am willing to write letters for students who took my classes in support of their job hunting and graduate application. Here is my policy:

If you just finished the course without doing something extra, the letter will be standard:

* It will describe the scope and significance of the course
* It will describe your performance at a high level, which is reflected by your course grade

In my opinion, such a letter will neither hurt your case nor help your case significantly.

To request such a letter:

* Drop me an email and get a confirmation.
* Remind me when the deadlines are close. Note there are application deadlines (e.g. Dec 5) which are for applicants but not the letter writers. However, I will do my best effort to send in letters in time.
* Often, we do NOT need to meet in person.

If you have done extra things with the course, e.g. big data challenge, honor grade, small research tasks, the letter will highlight these things in addition to the standard content described above.

So, please carefully weigh my potential letter in comparison to other letters you may obtain.

Whom I cannot give letters to?

Note: your prospective employers/schools must explicitly solicit the letter from me. I cannot send them a letter without solicitation. And I cannot give you the letter.

About the deadline

The application deadline (e.g. Dec 15) is for applicants not the letter writers. In general, faculty are very busy in Dec. And I personally do not know any schools will start reviewing graduate applications in Dec. Unless you have extraordinary reason, I prefer to finish your letters during the winter break and upload before the New Year.