March 12, 2014

To: Admissions Committee

Giselle Ruballos has asked me to write a letter of recommendation in support of her application for admission to the Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; I am delighted to do so. Giselle is one of those students who make teaching worthwhile. I have known her for three years. She has been a student of mine in three courses in the Sociology Department at San Diego State University, Introduction to Social Problems, Contemporary Social Theory and Social Construction of Reality.

Academically, Giselle is in the top 2% of students that I have taught at SDSU, several thousand in sixteen years. She received an A in each course. The Social Theory course, which is a required upper division course, is arguably the most difficult course in the department. The fact that she did so well in the theory course is a good indication, I believe, of her potential to succeed in a graduate program. There are two required papers in the course and she received As on each of those. The papers were well written, well thought out and reflected an ability to deal with abstract concepts and to think critically. She had extremely high exam scores. In all three courses, she made positive contributions to class discussions, asked intelligent and thoughtful questions, and demonstrated a desire and commitment to learn.

I got to know her on a more personal level because of her regular visits to the office. In these visits, I learned that Giselle also has a sincere interest in and concern for the problems that others face, especially problems of poverty, race and gender. And her interest and concern for others has translated into a desire to choose a vocation that will allow her to help those who need help the most. The Columbia program fits perfectly with her goals.

Watching her grow as a student and as a person has been rewarding for me as a teacher. Giselle is intelligent, thoughtful, kind and engaged. I believe she would excel in the program. I highly recommend her without qualification. If I can be of further assistance, I can be reached by email at [psemm@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:psemm@mail.sdsu.edu) or at my office phone 594-5906.

Sincerely,

Paul Tom Semm

Professor, Department of Sociology

San Diego State University