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## Guest's Note, Volume 1, Number 1

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The first issue of *The Northerner Review*, Northern Illinois University's first undergraduate history journal, is a cause for celebration. NIU history majors have been producing excellent research and writing for decades, but this is the first time they have had an opportunity to publish in a venue that has been created by and for history students at Northern. On behalf of the History Department faculty, congratulations to everyone who has been involved with this project.

As the students who edit and publish in this journal know, there is a big difference between studying history and practicing history. For History majors arriving in 495, the capstone senior thesis course, this realization sometimes comes as a shock. Senior thesis writers may have plenty of ideas about fascinating topics to write about, but this is not enough. To do what professional historians do, students must also pose historical questions, locate primary sources and carefully evaluate their usefulness as evidence, and situate their research within a body or bodies of historiography. Historical researchers do not just produce new information; they contribute to ongoing debates and discussions about the interpretation of the past.

The essays included in this first issue of the *Northerner Review* illustrate the diverse possibilities of historical inquiry. NIU's student historians have produced thoughtful analyses and original interpretations on topics ranging from the rise of the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century to US economic policy in Southeast Asia in the late twentieth. The essays contribute to debates in several fields of scholarship, including legal history, gender history, the history of empire, and diplomatic history. Their authors use many different kinds of sources to build their arguments: published scholarship, early U.S. newspapers, court cases, paintings and illustrations, diplomatic correspondence, and trial transcripts. They have asked new questions, conducted deep and careful research into the sources, and situated their arguments within continuing scholarly debates.

Publication in a peer-reviewed venue is a crucial aspect of professional historical work. The essays appearing in this journal have gone through a rigorous selection process that includes editing and revision based on the critiques of fellow students. The process of peer review helps ensure the highest standards of professional quality. In addition, it reminds us that historical work, while often conducted in isolation, is also a collaborative activity. The students who came together to create this journal understand that sharing one's work and reading the work of others, having stimulating discussions, and building an intellectual community matter at least as much as individual achievement. Congratulations again to the editors and authors of *The Northerner Review*, and special thanks to the journal's faculty advisor, Dr. Sandra Dawson, for her inspiring work.

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