

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Virginia Tech Undergraduate Historical Review. Created in 2011, the Review is intended to feature outstanding work from undergraduates at Virginia Tech. This publication is the first of many steps toward that goal. As a staff, our hope is that the Review will provide an avenue for undergraduate historical research to flourish beyond the classroom. History is an expansive and evolving field, and we ardently believe that students' research should join this ongoing dialogue. The Review and its staff are committed to creating a public forum for historical research conducted by Virginia Tech undergraduates.

The Review also seeks to extend its influence beyond its biannual publication. Fostering and developing historical research at Virginia Tech involves providing commentary on submissions, conducting workshops on research and writing skills, and giving students the opportunity to develop editorial skills as staff members. We hope that the Review will become a regular source of support for student researchers at Virginia Tech, and we look forward to a sustained partnership with the VT history department, Phi Alpha Theta, and history students throughout the university. For now, we present the Fall 2011 issue of the *Virginia Tech Undergraduate Historical Review* as evidence of this collaboration.

With each edition, the VTUHR will seek out original and well-developed research from highly talented undergraduate students. All Review submissions were vetted by our Board of Editors, consisting of six exceptional undergraduate history majors. Two undergraduate editors reviewed each paper, and the entire Editorial Board selected a few to advance to the next phase of the review process. For these papers, a faculty member familiar with

the topic provided additional commentary. Throughout the student and faculty reviews, a blind review process was used. Editors based their reviews on various criteria, including clarity, structure/organization, grammar, effective use of sources, understanding of relevant historiography, and the argument's originality. Ultimately, the editor and managing editors used the reviews to make the final decisions regarding publication.

The four articles chosen for publication in this issue exceeded the Board's expectations. In the first article, Chris Whitney focuses on government reform in the use of pesticides during the 1960s and 1970s. He questions the time the federal government spent in banning a threatening insecticide, known as DDT, because its negative effects had become well known through works such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. He concludes that multiple factors, such as public ignorance and DDT's ability to fight malaria, maintained the harmful insecticide's prominence. The second article remains in the 1960s but moves from the study of pesticides to the study of space. Rae Kennedy explores NASA's Project Apollo during a tumultuous phase of the Cold War. Her article dissects the means by which NASA portrayed Project Apollo to the American public as a civilian endeavor, thus disguising the project's true military goals. Kennedy utilizes a host of government documents, newspaper articles, and speeches to show how public opinion was shaped.

Myles Dauterive's article focuses on the 1979 nuclear catastrophe at the Three Mile Island Power Plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Exploring the vague safety guidelines prior to the incident, Myles Dauterive highlights the reform efforts made to change the United States' nuclear power industry. Lastly, Luke Kalnajs' submission looks at a completely different type of reform: cultural assimilation. Kalnajs relies heavily on primary sources as he presents the intimate accounts of Latvian immigrants in

the United States following the Second World War. Utilizing exhaustive personal narratives, this article assesses the ways in which communities of Latvian immigrants developed a distinct identity for themselves following their escape of Soviet persecution.

As we launch the *Virginia Tech Undergraduate Historical Review*, we look forward to supporting the work of creative and motivated young historians. While developing the Review in coming years, we have aspirations of it becoming an outlet for undergraduate research throughout the nation. For now, we thank you for your support and hope you enjoy the first issue of the *Virginia Tech Undergraduate Historical Review*.

*Stephen O'Hara & Heather Lennon*  
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*Blacksburg, Virginia*