

## Editor's Introduction

"There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits."

—Karl Marx, *Preface to the 1872 French edition of Das Kapital*.

It is a distinct pleasure to introduce this second volume of *Royal Road*. Not only do we have another exceptional set of student authors, but the journal's editorial framework has grown, as well. Last year, Daniel Dooghan, David Reamer, and I handled the bulk of the essay vetting, reader reporting, and editorial work, while the authors worked with their AWR 201 professors, who acted as mentors for their projects. This year we formalized the process by adding an editorial staff, who not only selected the finalists, but also wrote reader's reports and worked with the individual authors throughout the revision and publication process. I want to dedicate this volume to those new editors; they are some of the best teachers, researchers, guides, and colleagues that the University of Tampa has to offer, and, as I have heard again and again, they make a huge difference in their students' lives. Professors Sarah Fryett, Cari Hovanec, Ashley Palmer, Josh Waggoner, Aimee Whiteside, and Daniel Wollenberg are not only models of professional excellence, but they are patient guides for our *Royal Road* authors as they make the "fatiguing climb" through the publication process.

Despite its challenges, one of the many rewards of working with student authors is watching the remarkable growth that these exceptionally bright and motivated scholars make in the span of a single year. I think I speak for all of the faculty editors when I say that none of us had developed the kind of writerly maturity that we see in our *Royal Road* authors at such an early stage of their academic careers. For most of us, coming to understand the rigors of publication came later on in graduate school as an arduous and lonely process of blind submission, rejection, and multiple revisions before finally achieving tenuous acceptance. Such a difficult and lonely process requires deep personal drive, a kind of need to have your voice heard,

and that's the common denominator among our faculty editors and student authors alike. I confess that for me that deep desire is the tell-tale sign of a student research project that has promise. For an essay to make it into *Royal Road*, it not only must be nominated as the top essay in its section; it then also has to be selected from nearly one hundred sections in a given academic year. When compared with the acceptance rates for many other journals, both undergraduate and professional, *Royal Road* stands out as highly competitive. We ask a great deal of our student authors, and time and again they rise to the occasion.

This year we have seven provocative and fascinating essays spanning a broad spectrum of research interests, but what they all share in common is a certain philosophical optimism about the possibility for change in the contemporary world. Even as they confront issues and problems with ominous social and environmental consequences, each author manages to suggest hope for a better future. The opening article, by Katy Todd, examines the popular practice of tattooing among "millennials" as an assertion of identity in an increasingly secularized modern world. With an impressive depth and breadth of historical scholarship, she argues that tattooing satisfies a material need for personal identity that religion had once provided within our culture. By contrast, Brianna Yaeger's essay looks forward toward a future where genetic technology will inevitably allow individuals to modify or "design" the physical and intellectual characteristics of babies while they are still in the womb. Such incredible control over the genetic sequence raises questions about class, about who will or will not be able to afford genetic engineering, and thus about the ethical concerns that this technology currently does not address. Ultimately, she calls for regulation of the genetic engineering industry before rampant capitalistic enterprise leads to social disaster.

Both Ally Marter and Claudia Kirby examine looming environmental disasters and call for regulatory intervention as a means of slowing and potentially reversing the effects of environmental exploitation. Ally's essay analyzes the impacts of salmon farming, an industry that holds promise as a high-protein, sustainable food source for growing human populations,

but one that has become prone to unethical shortcuts that have contributed to water pollution. By encouraging farmers to adopt “integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA),” salmon farmers could raise multiple ecologically complimentary species at once, increasing their yields and providing an environmentally sustainable food source for the future. Claudia Kirby addresses a much more local concern: the loss of native mangrove habitat in Florida and the concomitant environmental degradation that has resulted. She explores the myriad anthropocentric causes for mangrove losses, but also successfully highlights the amazing resiliency of mangroves as a species, their enormous potential for storing CO<sub>2</sub> and thus reversing global climate change.

Arden Igleheart shifts the volume’s focus from timely environmental issues to timely gender ones. Specifically, her essay analyzes discrimination against female journalists in television news by drawing upon a number of compelling studies that reveal longstanding biases in the industry. It perhaps comes as no surprise that women have not been treated with the same respect as men in the news business, but by documenting patterns of sexual bias and inequality, her essay participates in a broader feminist discourse on inequality at a crucial moment for women in America. Erica Gambatese traces another insidious form of bias in contemporary American culture, Islamophobia, and its virulent shift toward racial profiling in the post-9/11 era. Her essay looks especially at the role that dress plays in perpetuating ignorant and often incorrect stereotypes about Muslims, ultimately making a strong case for better religious and cultural education for children in schools. Finally, our second volume concludes on an altogether different note with Nicholas Oakes’s reflections on progressive income tax reform. One can hardly imagine a more apt topic in light of recent tax reform legislation in Washington and its potentially devastating consequences for many Americans. Among other things, Nicholas’s essay is remarkable for taking a notoriously complicated topic and clearly explaining its relevance for citizens today.

To say that I am proud of the authors in this year’s class of *Royal Road* essays underestimates the significance of their accomplishment. They are some of the best students at UT, and

their work will stand as a model for future AWR 201 essayists. In that sense they not only raise the bar for *Royal Road* authors, but they also set a standard for the Academic Writing Program. It is always our sincere wish that the hard work that elevates very good 201 papers to publishable undergraduate research essays helps to make our authors better writers and scholars, but what I know with certainty is that their work makes us better teachers and researchers, and also makes the University of Tampa a better place for all.

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