# *Pangaea* Op-Ed from the History Honours Seminar: Get to Know Your Peers!

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At the risk of sounding cliché, when I first started university, everything was completely online. I started in the Fall of 2020 and, like everyone else, saw my teachers and classmates exclusively through Zoom screens and Brightspace discussion board posts. Only in the last couple of years most things have (somewhat) returned to a pre-Covid "normal." As a graduating student, it is interesting to contrast these early years of university with my most recent, and really explore what makes university the so-called "best years of your life." Fundamentally, what I missed out on the most in those early years was the community that school created—specifically, the relationships between classmates.

Peers are individuals who, in some capacity, are in a similar standing and are considered equals. This term perfectly describes university students, who, despite coming from diverse backgrounds, all arrive with the same desire to learn more. No one enters university an expert, and the joy of school comes from learning new things with people who are equally as excited to learn these things. This only grows as you begin to take upper-year courses and start to figure out the subjects that interest you. Everyone has the same desire to learn, but each person offer different insights and perspectives that make learning so interesting and exciting. This is how progress and innovation occur: not within echo chambers, but in spaces where different ideas interact and bounce off each other.

I am currently writing the Honours thesis and taking the seminar class, and while it has been hard at times (*so* much reading and writing!), it has also been incredibly rewarding. It has been a genuine treat to develop my research project and explore my little niches of history—17th-century Spanish miracles! Most importantly, I have cherished getting to know my classmates and their topics, each person having found their own particular interests that are all so unique and interesting. One aspect of the seminar, which terrified me at first, is the peer reviews. In these, we share our drafts and give comments and feedback on each other's work. While it is incredibly vulnerable to offer up my work, it benefited my writing tenfold, with my peers and their various perspectives contributing different connections and insights or even weaknesses and assumptions in my arguments. I am a better writer and thinker for it.

I want to extend this idea of peer review to *Pangaea*. This year, only Dalhousie and King's students were invited to submit, making each contributor in the journal one of your peers. You probably know them, and not in the abstract way that I knew my classmates in first year, as pictures on a screen, but as the people you see in classes or at school events. Each contributor has written on a topic that interests them, and this is your chance to see their work and their passion. I encourage you to read these works, to gain insight into their perspectives and interests.

I want to conclude by thanking the editors of *Pangaea* for working to organize this journal. I, and the rest of the Honours seminar, were editors and can attest to the major behind-the-scenes work that goes into its completion. A special thanks to Kriti Maini, Claire Blackmer, and Sam Kennie, as well as the Dalhousie Undergraduate History Society, for all the work that they have done this year.

And to you, the reader, I hope you find the pieces in this journal interesting and thought-provoking. I encourage you to sit back, relax, and enjoy reading the result of your peers' hard work. Take this as an opportunity to get to know them and areas of history you might not have explored otherwise. Seeing as our essays are usually given only to our professors, journals like *Pangaea* offer us an important opportunity to read each other's work. This journal, like the Honours seminar, will allow you to get to know your peers better and learn about new topics and perspectives. I hope you enjoy it.