James R. Shirley Undergraduate Essay Prize

This $250 prize is given for an outstanding essay submitted by an undergraduate student in any NIU history course other than HIST 491 during the previous two semesters. James R. Shirley (1925-1993) joined the history department in 1962 as a specialist in Chinese history. He was renowned for his teaching, and Asian history became a popular subject for students during the thirty years he taught at NIU. Shirley also served as faculty adviser for the local chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the international honor society in history. The Shirley family established an endowment in honor of James R. Shirley. Faculty who would like to nominate a history major or minor student should submit his or her essay along with the instructions for the writing assignment to the History Department office. Students can also nominate themselves by submitting the essay to the History Department office.

HIST 491 Research Paper Prize

This $250 prize is awarded to each of the two research papers written in the HIST 491 Research Seminar that demonstrate the most significant scholarly achievement. This course is a requirement for all history majors and the prize considers papers completed during the previous two semesters. Faculty who would like to nominate a student should submit the student's paper to the History Department office. Students can also nominate themselves by submitting the paper to the History Department office.

Department of History

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Marvin Rosen Undergraduate Scholarship

This $500 scholarship is given in honor of Marvin Rosen (1934-2001), who taught history at NIU for almost forty years, and who was known for his strong dedication to teaching and connecting with students, especially undergraduates. Rosen's ability to engage students sometimes involved delivering impassioned lectures standing atop his desk, and unapologetically standing by his often non-conformist views without ever expecting students to agree, but challenging them to examine their own beliefs instead. His dedication to mentoring student's interests and achievements in history went far, in one case as far as claiming not to be able to drive, so that he could hire a student as his chauffeur and thus provide him with financial assistance as he continued to educate him on the road. The History Department established an endowment in Marvin Rosen's memory that honors his spirit as a teacher and recognizes a student whose desire to learn history extends beyond the classroom. Students who recently developed a strong interest in history, and especially freshmen and sophomores in survey classes, who show motivation and initiative to be challenged further by more intense study of historical questions, and whose academic record speaks to these developments, are encouraged to consider this scholarship. Students who wish to apply should have completed at least six hours of history courses at NIU and should submit the application form, one letter of recommendation by a History Department faculty member, and a two-to-three page long personal statement to the History Department office. The personal statement should explain how and why the student became interested in history, career goals, or any other information the applicant feels important to be considered.

Oscar Matasar History Scholarship

Oscar Matasar (1915-1996) was an alumnus of the NIU History Department. After finishing high school he had to work for two years in order to finance his further education. Mr. Matasar's ambition was to become a teacher of history. He began his studies at NIU in 1939, and after serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, returned to NIU to complete his degree. He received an M.A. in Latin American history from the University of New Mexico and went on to become a high school history teacher for almost thirty years. Oscar Matasar cared deeply about education, social responsibility, and altruism. He volunteered his talents and contributed generously to many causes, especially adult education. The $1000 scholarship in his honor is given to recognize a student of high academic achievement and financial need. Students from a non-traditional background or those belonging to an underrepresented group are especially encouraged to apply.

Students who wish to apply should have completed at least six hours of history courses at NIU and should submit the application form, one letter of recommendation by a History Department faculty member, a demonstration of financial need, and a two-to-three page long personal statement to the History Department office. The personal statement should explain how and why the student became interested in history, career goals, or any other information the applicant feels important to be considered.

Jeannie A. Hainties Scholarships

The late Jeannie Amstrong Hainties was a long-time supporter of NIU and the humanities. She established an endowment to benefit undergraduate education in the History Department in 1982. The two $500 scholarships honor her wish to support academic excellence. They are awarded to two students exemplifying past and potential academic achievement through their outstanding credentials and/or through overcoming a significant physical, financial, academic or other obstacle. All history majors are eligible to apply. Students should submit the application form, recommendation letters by two History Department faculty, and a two to three page personal statement to the History Department office. The statement should explain how and why the student became interested in history, career goals, a description of the obstacle overcome (where applicable), or any other information the applicant feels important to be considered.