

A Reflection on the Covid-19 Pandemic

When the outbreak of Covid-19 was declared a national emergency, no one imagined the unprecedented change it would bring to everyone's lives. The virus has impacted every institution in society and it has transformed the way that Americans live. Since the outbreak, every single day has seemed so bizarre, almost dreamlike. With what started as a small outbreak in the province of Wuhan, China, the virus has quickly spread around the entire world claiming a countless number of lives. Its spread has eerily resembled the domino effect, with one nation becoming the focal point of the virus after another. As the WHO declared a global health emergency, countries around the world began to impose strict social distancing measures and even nationwide lockdowns. Others were urging their citizens to stay home and only leave for essential activities. At this point, much about the virus itself was not known and no effective treatment or vaccine existed. It was generally agreed upon that for most people, Covid-19 causes only mild flu-like symptoms, however, it can make some people seriously ill. This was particularly evident with the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions, who appeared to be more vulnerable. Knowing this information was, of course, alarming for many, especially with those that are immunocompromised or have elderly family members. For myself, it was horrifying to think that I can potentially get my grandparents seriously ill if I had unknowingly contracted the virus and then gave it to them. This is what caused many, including myself, to practice social distancing and other safety precautions, such as wearing a face mask and washing hands more often. With the virus making its way overseas, it was only a matter of time before the U.S would begin to take precautionary measures as well. To mitigate the spread of the virus and reduce total mortality, the government would ban all large social gatherings, close non-essential

businesses, and implement various travel restrictions. Along with these changes, school closures would begin to take effect as well. This is what had the largest impact on my personal life, as I began to transition to remote learning along with all my peers. At this juncture, it was quite apparent that this pandemic is life-altering for everyone in the nation. Whether you were a student, worked at a grocery store, or were a doctor fighting in the front lines, this was going to affect you in some form or another.

It was nearly two months ago that my school announced they will be shutting down for an unspecified amount of time, due to the severity of the virus and state guidelines enforcing strict social distancing measures. Today, I find myself in a state of angst in regards to life during this epidemic. My days have melded into continuous online Zoom lectures, constant distractions, and boredom due to quarantine and reduced work hours from my job. With all my courses and schoolwork abruptly changing to an online format, my motivation to continue to study and learn has substantially diminished. Naturally, I am a task-driven student who enjoys engagement in a classroom setting, so this change has been difficult to adapt to. As I feel trapped in this quarantine, I've also realized how I took social interaction for granted. This was something I can look forward to in school and during the weekends, but now, the simple action of greeting your friend with a hug or a handshake, has in a sense, become an unwritten forbidden rule. Aside from school, my reduced work shifts have also had a significant impact on my personal life. Before the Covid-19 outbreak, I was working almost 25 hours a week walking dogs. Now that has changed to as little as 3 hours a week, with many of my clients no longer needing my services. As someone who pays for their own tuition and rent, this has been a huge concern of mine. Considering many places have also drastically reduced their employment offerings, it has been

very difficult to find a new job and has forced me to reevaluate my home situation. My family members have also been unfortunate victims of the reduced working hours caused by this pandemic. Per CDC guidelines, my mother cannot treat patients at her dental office, unless it is an emergency. This has caused her to cut her working hours significantly. Another concern for her has been the lack of availability in proper personal protective equipment, which has seen a major increase in demand during the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of this, she and her assistants have been reducing the number of N95 masks they dispose of throughout the day. As one can imagine, dealing with emergency patients is not only a stressful ordeal, but it carries a multitude of risks when considering the possibility of pathogenic transmission. Thus, the shortage of personal protective equipment poses a high risk to my mother and everyone around her. My deep appreciation and gratitude for her hard work during these strange times have gone up tremendously, but I have been incredibly concerned for her overall safety. Due to the nature of her work, we have agreed to remain separate from each other until the epidemic subsides. This, in turn, has also affected my grandparents who are both dependent on me and my mother. But for their safety, we are making sure to avoid any unnecessary interactions with them and only delivering supplies to their doorstep. Although my age puts me at a lower risk of getting seriously ill, I know that those around me, including my loved ones, may be more vulnerable than I am, which is why I have taken all the necessary precautions during this crisis.

The short-term effects of this pandemic have been far-reaching, and the long-term effects leave Americans and those around the world fearing for the future. This crisis has disrupted economic and social order on a profound scale. Unemployment has reached staggering numbers with millions of Americans filing jobless claims. International flights have been grounded and

airlines have seen a massive reduction in people flying domestically, mostly due to fear and travel advisories. Americans have been asked to social distance, avoid crowds, and remain 6ft apart from each other. Public gatherings at concerts, movie theaters, and restaurants have all been banned. Service industries and major events practically came to a halt overnight. In fear of famine and possibly wide scale violence, Americans have been stockpiling on groceries, medical supplies, and even weaponry. With all of these events rapidly unfolding, Americans are wondering if they will return to their previous lives. From a personal standpoint, the opposite is rather likely. It is difficult to predict what will exactly happen in the years after the pandemic subsides, but the current circumstances can offer us a number of clues. My pessimistic side says that we will see a dispirited population trapped indoors for months, and possibly years. Without a vaccine or effective treatment for Covid-19, the virus will likely circulate in the population for a very long time, with resurgences during the flu season. This will make it difficult for people to start coming out again as cases will simply increase and hospitals will overflow. Vulnerable Americans will likely remain quarantined for longer than others and social distancing measures will continue to remain. The next few years will include both progressions and setbacks. As the nation begins to slowly re-open, Americans will gradually return to work and the economy will recover to an extent. But if too many people get sick again, quarantining will once again become unavoidable. Overall, the world will become far more reclusive and isolated. The comfort of being with others will be replaced by the greater comfort of being isolated, especially with those you do not know. We now understand that being in close proximity with others raises risks, so we will think twice before interacting in person. As a result, digital communication will increase, making people feel safer and connected from a distance. Remote learning will take on a larger

role in educational institutions and with many professions being discovered as workable from home, jobs might also adapt to remote environments. Psychologically, many of these changes could severely damage general morale. America will likely see higher rates of mental health issues and even domestic abuse, which has already been observed within the last couple of months. Politically, Americans may see a decline in polarizing ideologies as a way of looking past their differences in the fight against a common threat. Conversely, Americans may shift their political perspectives in support of those who manage the crisis better. Our nation may also see a revamped health care system that is better prepared in the event of an infectious disease. Some of these changes may include making viral tests more accessible, which has been criticized as a shortfall during the preliminary stages of the pandemic.

History often repeats itself, and it can give us better insight into what kind of climate the world is approaching today. When the Spanish arrived in the Americas, carrying germs that thrived in dense populations, the natives who had no exposure or immunity to these diseases were effectively doomed. They had never experienced the diseases that the Spanish brought, and the viruses ultimately devastated the continent, wiping out almost the entire indigenous population. Of course, the coronavirus has not been nearly as deadly, nor has it been paired with the invasion by another country. However, some of the same themes are certainly present in what we are experiencing today, and potentially to a larger degree in the foreseeable future. Just like the natives, whose empires and political structures were defeated due to disease, America may also experience a considerable decline in its political and economic institutions. The bubonic plague, which wiped out a third of Europe's population, had changed the landscape of nearly every nation affected. In particular with Spain, we know that the feudal economy dependent on

peasants essentially eroded in the face of the pandemic. The precautionary measures applied to countries because of the coronavirus, including business closures, travel restrictions, and quarantines have produced a great deal of consequences for the global economy. In America alone, this is evident by the millions of workers who have been asked to stay home and quarantine. This is not a sustainable way of life for most Americans, especially with those living paycheck to paycheck. If this trend continues, the economy is at risk of spiraling into a depression similar to Spain's during the plague era. With difficult times approaching, fear and panic often bring out the worst in people. Historically, pandemic outbreaks have corresponded with a rise in persecution against marginalised communities. A desire to assign responsibility becomes a common pandemic response. In Spain, Jews and Muslims were blamed for the catastrophes caused by the plague, which triggered a series of widespread violent attacks against their communities. Unfortunately, we are seeing these trends recur during our own pandemic, with reports of racially targeted incidents against Asian-Americans rising and blame being projected against China.

In the midst of all the chaos surrounding the pandemic, there are positive outlooks to keep things in perspective. As we've learned with other pandemics, they have never lasted forever. Many nations are already making progress against the coronavirus with case numbers gradually declining and cities slowly beginning to open. With all this time we have on our own, we have been reminded what really matters, so we should use this opportunity to rediscover ourselves and learn to enjoy the simple things in life again. Social distancing will force us to sacrifice a lot, but it will also open the door for new joys and hobbies. Ultimately, the future of this virus depends on how our society responds to it, and as we've seen, there's a lot we can do

to help. Confronting this crisis will require responsibility from everyone and overcoming it will not be a quick solution. It will require time and innovation, but we will all get through this, and emerge stronger than before.

Upcoming appointments

 Monday, May 11 at 3:30 PM in A61 Kaplan Location (A61 Kaplan Hall) with Samantha D. 

[Book a new appointment](#)

Contact us

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Day Locations/Hours for Spring 2020:

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Social Science Satellite (Powell 238) -- Mon. thru Thurs. 10am-6pm | Fri. 10am-3pm
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