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#### Midterm 2: Option 4

When I first heard of Covid-19, the deadly and disruptive virus that has been spreading through most parts of the world over the last couple months, it seemed a distant worry-affecting people so far removed from my daily life that I hardly gave it a second thought. Today, after over 300,000 deaths, a countrywide lockdown and a major disruption to my own life, I find myself shocked at the virus's impact on all aspects of my life. As a U.S. citizen, I am frustrated with how the government has handled the pandemic and wish we had taken more proactive steps to protecting our nation from the disruption to society the virus has caused. As a college student, I am bored and tired of the lockdown restrictions and miss the freedom, friends and fun that college life entails. I also hope to draw upon my education and apply what I am learning to the historical time we are all going through. As a human being, I feel for those that have been most affected by the virus and am struggling to reconcile my desires with the general public's health and safety. Today, I am just as confused about where we go from here as I was when I first heard of the virus killing thousands of people in China's Wuhan province.

The Coronavirus has greatly affected the lives of my family and myself. Thankfully, we are all healthy and are lucky enough to be able to self-isolate in a spacious house with plenty of food, things to do, and access to medical care. However, like many in the United States, it hasn't been an easy time for us. My parents own a Laundromat that my dad operates, a business that is considered essential by California Governor Gavin Newsom. While I am happy that my family's

business wasn't forced to close down, my parents had to lay off one of their employees and my Dad has been forced to work 7 days a week to keep the business afloat. He is nearly 70, hoping to retire in a year, and it makes me sad to think of him doing people's laundry 7 days a week to support my education and future. Also, given his age and some heart issues in his past, he seems to be at greater risk of dying from the virus if he is infected. He wears gloves and washes his hands as much as possible, but I constantly worry for his safety and hope he can start taking days off soon. My brother, a 23 year-old recent graduate from Pepperdine University has also been hit hard by the reverberating effects of the virus. He was living in LA and working for the Los Angeles Clippers, seemingly off to a great start in his young professional life. Unfortunately, when the NBA cancelled their season in March, my brother was out of a job, couldn't afford rent, and had to move home. What seemed like a promising start to a successful life has ran into a pothole that has sidelined him for the foreseeable future. He majored in sports administration in college and hopes to eventually work in marketing for a major sports team. Since none of the major sports leagues in the U.S. are operating, and will probably start with restricted fan attendance, there are no jobs for him to be applying to and he doesn't really have much to do. He is doing his best to stay busy, works out every day and helps out around the house but I can tell he is struggling with living at home as a college graduate and is antsy to get on with his life. My mom, who works from home, has probably been the least affected. She already worked from home as an editor and freelance writer and has been able to stick to her daily routine for the most part.

The Coronavirus pandemic has also affected my life and thrown a massive kink in what I expected my college experience to be like. I am a junior economics student here at UCLA, a place where I have met lifelong friends and consider a second home. This March, as I was

studying for finals and looking forward to a fun spring quarter, Chancellor Gene Block sent out an email stating that the rest of the quarter, and the entirety of spring quarter, will be conducted online. Initially, I was ecstatic because one of my finals was made optional and I didn't have to take it. Soon, it dawned on me that I wouldn't be returning to UCLA in the spring and would have to remain home. Academically, the transition to online learning has been much tougher than I expected it to be. For all three of my classes, my lectures have been pre-recorded, so I can watch them and take notes in my own time. For some reason, however, I am having a much harder time finding the effort and motivation to do schoolwork at home than I ever did at school. Given that all of my work is online, it is really easy for me to just close my computer, go hang out with my brother, and tell myself I'll take care of it tomorrow. As a result, I am behind in all of my classes and have an intimidating pile of work looming over me that must be completed in the next 4 weeks. All of my professors have been extremely flexible and have given their best effort in making online learning a positive experience, but a high-level college education wasn't designed to take place online, and I am having a tough time with the transition.

As with the academic transition to online learning, I have been struggling with being separated from the UCLA community. I miss playing basketball, going to bars, and watching movies with my best friends. I feel as if I have been stuck with the most stressful parts of college while missing out on the experiences that I will actually hold onto. Before quarantine, spending time with my friends and interacting with new people on a daily basis gave me a healthy outlet from the stress and fatigue of studying. It felt like I could do anything on any given day, and schoolwork was just a part of an educational and meaningful college experience. Now, like most people practicing self-isolation, I feel boxed in and stagnant. My only options for my days are doing schoolwork, which I have less and less motivation to do, playing video games, and going

for a run. My daily routine is getting repetitive and the days seem to blend together. To add to my unhappiness, there is more and more evidence that UCLA is planning to make next fall quarter online as well. Chancellor Block has not announced it yet, but the Cal state universities have announced that they will be holding fall semester online, and the general consensus is that the UC system will make a similar decision very soon. The prospect of spending the first quarter of my senior year at my house, separated from my friends, saddens me immensely. I trust that UCLA will make the safest decision for its students, staff and faculty, but I am greatly looking forward to returning to campus and continuing my studies and my life.

My family and I's struggles with the pandemic surrounding Covid-19 seems to be similar to those of my friends and people that I know. Self-isolation and quarantining seems to be taking a toll, and many people I know have become unemployed and are struggling to make ends meet. However, my family, friends and I are healthy, safe and have access to food, water and comfortable living conditions. Many Americans, especially minority and impoverished communities, are facing much more difficult times than I am as a result of the pandemic. Millions of Americans have lost their job, many of which are low paying, due to the shutdown of all non-essential businesses. The Government has sent out \$1,200 stimulus checks to those that qualify and offered small business loans to those that have been affected, but it seems like if businesses don't reopen soon, millions of people will have no way of making a living. Poor communities in large cities are so bunched together that they don't have the opportunity to self-isolate, and many people don't have access to testing or medical care. Like many issues in the capitalist American system, minorities and low-income communities have been hit the hardest by the Coronavirus. Moving forward, the Government is going to have to make some tough

decisions to keep the public safe while allowing Americans to earn a living wage and live their lives.

Covid-19 is making life grueling for millions of impoverished Americans and people around the world, but it is not the first time an infectious disease has served as a vehicle of oppression. In the late 1400s and early 1500s, as Spanish and Portuguese explorers reached the Americas, they brought with them a disease that killed millions, ruined civilizations, and turned an advanced people into European subjects for centuries. Smallpox was brought to the Americas by Spanish explorers including Christopher Columbus and Hernan Cortes, who landed in what is now Mexico. These civilizations, including the Aztec empire, were incredibly advanced for their time. Unfortunately, they didn't understand the origin of the disease or how to cure it, and it decimated their population. Smallpox killed so many and wreaked so much havoc upon the native peoples that small groups of Spanish conquistadors, with the help of several native groups, were able to overtake the Aztec and Inca empires (Ruiz, lecture (04/27/2020)). Two of the biggest American empires fell to Spanish invaders because smallpox more or less eliminated their population. Eventually, the Spanish turned these regions into New Spain, profiting immensely off the indigenous people, their land and their resources. These civilizations never recovered from the effects of smallpox, as the few who survived lived under Spanish rule and were severely taken advantage of for decades. Similar to the amplified effects of Covid-19 on minority and low-income communities that is occurring in America right now, smallpox opened the door for the oppression of an entire civilization. Hopefully, by looking towards the past and doing the research on the present, the Government can get help to those that need it most and lead us out of these turbulent times.

I was three years old when the devastating events of 9/11 occurred, so the Coronavirus pandemic is the first, if not only, historical event that I have lived through and been a part of. The virus' ability to stop the world in its tracks has taken me completely by surprise. I am trying to take it one day at a time, but I have been self-isolating for months now and I miss the real world. Los Angeles has just extended its lockdown for three more months. Selfishly, I want it to be over as quickly as possible, so I can press the play button on my life again. In reality, I know it is better to be safe than sorry, and trust the powers at be to make the right decisions. Mostly, I hope those who are hurting the most receive the most support and that scientists and doctors learn all they can from this pandemic to formulate a better response to the next one. My struggles and inconveniences pale in comparison to those that have lost loved ones or risked their lives helping others. Hopefully, in 20 to 30 years, I will be able to look back at 2020 as a year in which we came together to solve a problem instead of using it to alienate each another. I am sure the coming months will be filled with political discussion about the pros and cons of reopening the country. As a college student, I guess there is not much I can do besides stay in my house, wash my hands, and hope that the Government reaches a safe and reasonable solution.

## Bibliography

Ruiz, Teofilo, lecture 04/27/2020.