Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic is a period which America and the world will not forget. In this paper, I will personally reflect on the current circumstances we face during this Covid-19 pandemic by illustrating a) its effects on my personal life and living situation, b) its effects on this country and the world, c) the parallels the pandemic shares with history, and d) the issues the pandemic reveals about modern society. I was first informed about the spread of the coronavirus through social media. The material that I viewed was extremely worrying. All I saw was videos of people collapsing and dying on the streets of China, as hospitals filled with people who were struggling to breathe. This graphic material was difficult to watch, but it encouraged me to learn more about what was going on regarding this virus. I also understood that what I saw on social media could sometimes be exaggerated. Furthermore, I learned that large social gatherings would be limited and that classes would be taught online. At that point, I was calmer from the worries that I had about the virus because I became more educated about it. I tried to see the good in the situation and thought that going to school would be easier since I would not have to commute. I thought that my life would overall be normal, with the changes being that classes were online and big gatherings were limited. Next thing I knew, we were ordered to completely stay at home and practice social distancing. This was disappointing, and at this point I learned that cases around us were becoming more prevalent, which was quite concerning. I was worried about my
parents since I learned that the coronavirus is more deadly in older people. Every time they would go to buy groceries, a recurring thought that they might catch it appeared in my mind. We noticed that people bought essential groceries frantically. It was getting more difficult for us to shop for food since store hours changed and the stores were packed. Additionally, people stockpiled on items, so we began to worry that at some point we would not be able to obtain needed supplies. There is also a concern that the situation might lead to violence. This is why we bought extra non-perishable food items and some emergency survival gear. We fear that if the lockdown takes place for too long, there would be an increase in crime. As days and weeks passed, I conducted research on the circumstances America was facing. I kept up with various updates and statistics on the virus, which caused me to have mixed emotions since some sources were positive but many led to more fear. A feeling of doubt was thrust upon me. I was fearful about what our future would look like, and how the virus would impact us.

Consequences

This Covid-19 pandemic has serious social, political, and economic consequences on the country, and the world at large. Socially, people have become distanced. Lives have been lost, so families grieve. Life feels disconnected, and the lack of social interaction and connection feels demoralizing. The lockdown led to a rise in xenophobia, substance abuse, and depression as fear has spread across the world. This new reality that we are enduring has negative effects on my mental health. On a daily basis, I get struck by a feeling of frustration at this situation. Additionally, the isolation has had a negative effect on my motivation. I frequently could not help but think about the activities I miss, such as going to the gym, seeing friends, and eating at restaurants. Social distancing and wearing masks has become the norm in our society nowadays.
My experience here at UCLA is severely impacted, as learning through digital meetings is not optimal for me. Face to face interaction with professors is much more enjoyable and engaging. Making new friends at this time is also difficult. I had such high hopes for all the great experiences I would experience at UCLA, but now I cannot. Although it is a struggle, I always attempt to remain optimistic and look at all the great things this country is doing to save lives. Despite the suboptimal situation, I try to look at my life through a lens of gratitude.

Politically, we are currently facing a moment of chaos, confusion, and tension. The Covid-19 pandemic has become very politicized, which I really dislike. It is unfortunate to see that a public health concern can be so intertwined with political agendas. The focus in politics should be to restore order to the nation by protecting the people and getting the country running again. However, many media sources continue to spread misinformation, which causes uncertainty and panic. This aspect affected me personally as I would constantly feel uncertainty; some days were characterized by an impending sense of doom while other days were characterized by a feeling that this virus is nothing to worry about. I am aware that this virus is dangerous, but the misinformation does not help in a time when Americans want answers. This discrepancy is troubling because I did not know which sources of information to trust, which led to suspicion. Furthermore, I believe that some political leaders seem to be taking advantage of the hysteria and attempting to create policies that enable their political goals to be met, rather than actually focusing on the health of the people. Another issue that I notice is that party stances on this pandemic are very polarized because they disagree on how to solve this issue and provide relief to the people. Each state government can approach the issue through their own means; I believe that we should learn from the states that show promising statistics so that successful
outcomes can be duplicated. Moreover, this event highlights the complexity of federalism as a system that is unpredictable. The distribution of power between states and the federal government has shown to be problematic when the state governments and the federal government do not all act in a synchronized manner. Officials on the federal level and officials on the state level do not always agree with each other, creating confusion and mistrust. For instance, New York officials criticized the federal government for not providing them with sufficient medical equipment, thus increasing tensions. These issues regarding the strained relations between state and federal governments should encourage new means of communicating and distributing resources between both sides in order to avoid these conflicts.

From an economic perspective, the pandemic has debilitating effects on people's lives. This lockdown has resulted in an artificial recession since the economy has been put to a complete stop. Since the businesses shut down, people are losing their jobs so many families do not have sources of income, which can tragically result in financial deprivation. My family and I are also economically affected by the pandemic because our income is negatively impacted. I do believe that the orders to stay at home are extremely important, especially since there was uncertainty about how dangerous the virus was at first. I believe that since we are now more educated about the virus than we were initially, the country should safely reopen in order to get people back to work and to stop the economic damage. My concern is that the damage from the lockdown can potentially outweigh the damage from the virus. These social, political, and economic consequences are seen across the world.

Connection to History
There are parallels between the present and the past. Societies have seen crises for as long as they existed. This relates to what I am learning because when analyzing the past, one can see that there are recurring themes that apply to the present. When looking at the history of Spain and Portugal, it is clear that the regions of the Iberian Peninsula have had many centuries of crisis. These epidemics and crises shape civilizations socially, politically, and economically. In Castile, we see religious tensions, internal conflicts, bankruptcy, famine, disease, and many more issues. The pandemic in our current times portrays that we still suffer from similar issues today. The polarization that I see in the media and in politics is quite similar to the tensions that were present throughout the Iberian Peninsula. In these regions, years of conflict among royal families and members of nobility often led to abuses of power, violence, and corruption. Investigating history also shows us how far we have come in handling these issues. We see throughout history, that certain groups are marginalized and oppressed. Today, this is a parallel to the pandemic causing an increase in xenophobia against Chinese people. The conquering of the New World had severe consequences on the indigenous populations, as disease and violence ran rampant. During that time period, societies had no means of treating or preventing disease, so populations were completely destroyed. Today, Covid-19 made its way across populations in the world and spread rampant as well. I am grateful that society today is advanced and has many more means of combating infectious diseases. It is hopeful to know that today, we can act fast and take the necessary precautions in order to save lives. Lastly, when looking at the history of Spain we see that the majority of the populations were of low socioeconomic status. Due to their positions, they were most vulnerable to times of crisis and adversity. This is similar to the circumstances today, since many people who are not fully economically secure and who need to work to
support their households are severely affected by the pandemic. As a student majoring in history, I acknowledge the significance of this event as it will be remembered in history.

Lessons

The circumstances that the world faces today were very unexpected and unpredictable. The medical system was not prepared for a pandemic of this magnitude, so it was overwhelmed at first. One issue in society that this pandemic reveals is the amount of pollution and environmental damage that humans left unchecked. With everyone in their homes, we are able to see just how much of a difference this makes on air pollution for instance. We already see that the skies are clearer than they have been in a while. This should encourage more measures to be put in place in order to protect the environment. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic reveals how unhealthy our country has become. The virus significantly affects those who have comorbidities such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, etc. These are all issues that can be prevented if we have basic health awareness. This is why it is so tragic to know that people cannot fend off the virus due to these preventable health issues. I believe that this teaches us that our medical system should focus more on holistic preventative measures rather than only treating ailments after they develop. I think that this should be a realization for Americans, as we should acknowledge the significance of overall health. People should be focusing more on improving their immune systems with basic exercise and diet rather than expecting a vaccine to do all the fighting for them. Moreover, I feel that a lesson learned from this pandemic is that it will teach us to be more grateful for our relationships. It teaches me that nothing is guaranteed and that I take things for granted sometimes. This epidemic shifted our lives in a matter of days; this gave me some perspective on how fragile life is. I hope that we will
learn from these tragic circumstances, and that we will be stronger and more prepared for if a similar situation arises again. I hope that instead of dividing us, the pandemic will unite us.