

Paper Assignment II  
COVID-19 Reflection

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## A Longing for Hope

In the Book of Genesis, it is written that God said: “let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over all creatures and all of the earth.” In 2020 it was clear that Humanity has lived up to that declaration as we have made ourselves the masters of the world. Despite our technology, our computers, our culture, and our medicine, there was one group of creatures that eluded our control; the ineffable creature called the virus. Coronavirus, in three short months, has shattered the world in ways rivaled only in impact by the World Wars of the twentieth century. For many, the specter of a deadly pandemic was only explored in history textbooks, movies, or medical school classes. When the disease started, many were in denial that a fatal epidemic could erupt in their lifetime. The specter of millions dying due to an invisible killing machine is no longer a nightmare; it is reality. It has injected fear into the hearts of billions, which ended the lives of a significant number of people. While the overall effects of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic will be unknown for some time, it has inarguably reshaped human history and, more personally, my life.

Talking about COVID- requires exploring how humanity has always been at the mercy of various pathogens. For most of history, humanity’s biological nemesis was *Variola Major*, commonly known as Smallpox. Smallpox was a vile scourge killing hundreds of millions of people before its ultimate eradication. When the Spanish arrived in the New World, their greatest weapon was not their guns, horses, cannons, or ships; it was the dormant Smallpox particles embedded in their bodies. In the Old World, civilization was brought to its knees by *Yersinia Pestis*, the bacterium that caused the infamous Black Death. Battling disease is a recurring theme in human history, and COVID-19 is no different from its historical cousins. As with the Black,

Death COVID-19 came out of nowhere to inflict pain upon human society. We believed that modern medicine made us better prepared to combat and contain a novel disease, but we were wrong. However, unlike in the Medieval period, the modern world is more closely connected due to the invention of airplanes and automobiles. While it took the Black Death years to entirely sweep over Europe, it merely took weeks for Coronavirus spread across the globe thanks to our new modes of quick transportation. While Coronavirus will not kill the same amount of people that died due to Plague or Smallpox, it provides a cautionary tale to future generations. Future generations should be mindful of this COVID-19 pandemic that they do occur in the modern age, and are not merely specters of the past. Our descendants should take note of the failures of the global /national response to the diseases to ensure the next deadly pandemic is quickly mitigated.

One of the most profound effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the immense social isolation that has been afflicted on me and the rest of society. Effectively combating COVID, necessitated the imposing of strict quarantine orders to prevent the disease from spreading and overwhelming the hospital system. However, accomplishing this goal meant shutting down the social aspects of human life, such as movie theaters, festivals, restraints, amusement parks, house parties, and sporting events. Humans are inherently social creatures, and the company of others is usually taken for granted until it suddenly disappears. Mass gatherings such as religious services, political rallies, festivals such as the running of the bulls in Spain, or sporting events are staples of human culture. These events represent core aspects of a given society's culture, particularly values it thinks are important. The Coronavirus pandemic froze our cultural and social events, and I believe this will be the defining memory of this event. While technology creates new modes to experience society through virtual means, it is not the same. As

a Dodgers fan, I lament the inability to go to baseball games with my friends to relax and enjoy the carefree days of my youth. I miss being able to class in person and interact with my Professors in a way that does not involve a screen. I miss being able to see my friends in person and not through Face-time or a text message bubble. The importance of socializing in human life cannot be overstated because socializing is how we create our culture, politics, identity. COVID-19 has transformed the public space to something that should be avoided and treated with caution. Social distancing has brought uneasiness to many, and it is essential to talk about the economic uncertainties that millions now face.

The pressures of economic anxiety are a defining feature those in the working class have to face daily. Before the pandemic, a large plurality of Americans was living paycheck to paycheck with most not being able to pay an emergency medical bill if something serious occurred. However, for many Americans, their economic prospects seemed sunny, with wages beginning to grow for the first time in over a decade. COVID-19 has proved to be an economic disruptor on par with the Great Depression of the 1930s due to the immense level of unemployment it has brought about. Millions of my fellow Americans are now unemployed, and many do face the nightmare their jobs will not reappear once society returns to normalcy. The new economic reality brought about by COVID has returned the spotlight on the ages of long chasms between the wealthy and working classes. The more affluent members of society have been able to work from home and mostly keep their sources of income, while members of the working class do not have such luxury. I come from a middle-class background, and my family operates a restaurant that has been impacted by the pandemic. The restaurant was forced to closed for a month due to the imposition of the “Stay At Home” orders, which was a great shock

to my family's financial security. The federal government passed a program to give forgivable loans to aid small businesses like my family's restaurant stay afloat during these uncertain times. However, these funds ended up being allocated to large companies that do not need these funds when thousands of small businesses are on the brink of insolvency. The COVID-19 pandemic has future exposed the reality that many economic institutions are more geared to the wealthier echelons of society. For many, Coronavirus will not be a plague of disease but also a scourge of poverty and unemployment. The death of potentially hundreds of thousands of small businesses will be something that will impact society for years to come. Future generations should take note, strive to create an economic system that is ready to protect the ordinary person and not just the wealthy.

Another area I want to reflect on the COVID world is how the pandemic has transformed our politics and not for the better. COVID-19 had the unique distinction of occurring amid the already heated 2020 Presidential election in the United States. Politically the United States in my time is hugely divided between Democrats and Republicans, and both sides seem to be living in almost entirely different worlds. Some hoped that the pandemic might bring the country together to fight the crisis, but partisan spirits remained steadfast to the detriment of the effort to restrict and mitigate Coronavirus. A nasty political side-effect of the pandemic is that it raised racial animosity toward immigrants and foreigners of Asian descent due to the disease being labeled by some as the "Chinese" virus. Increased prejudice in a time of pandemics is not new as groups such as the Jews were harassed and persecuted across Medieval Europe as it was wrongly believed that Jews seeded the Plague. The increased level of political hostility and racial prejudice, is a depressing outcome that COVID-19 has further entrenched in American society.

Crises such as pandemics are supposed to bring Americans together, not cause them to grow more politically and socially divided. The salience of political identity over the need to combat the virus has led to COVID having a deadlier impact in the United States than in European nations. America's pandemic outcome should warn future leaders not to let political motives or sentiments direct pandemic policy. The pandemic highlights the importance of having a decisive and responsible leader and not want who yearns to settle scores with his political opponents. In short, the people of the future should be wary of a nastier virus than COVID that being the infectious virus of partisan and prejudicial feelings, one that is not easy to inoculate against.

It is easy to write about Coronavirus in terms of historical context and its various impacts on society. Still, it is difficult to convey the personal pain of the virus as brought upon my life. I feel that pandemic has been a horrific event in my development because it has born a sense of fear in how it orient myself toward the world. I hold this great because I fear that I might lose my loved ones or my closest friends to this disease. The fear of losing someone I care about is something that haunts me every day because I know what it means to lose someone close to me I do not want to relive that experience even though it is inevitable. Not being able to live a normal life and being forced to attend school virtually, not being able to go to social events, has taken its toll because being cloistered at home is not a healthy activity. The pandemic railroaded my summer plans to have a crucial internship for my career, which has brought high anxiety whenever I think about the future. Despite these adverse effects that Coronavirus has brought in my life, it has been a positive development for advancing my creative side. Due to the extra free time, I have been able to write my narratives and work on my art projects after not being able to work on them due to my academic and professional responsibilities. I have been to unleash my

imagination onto my projects because I no longer have to worry about hiding my emotional side during these times, where everyone is revealing how they feel. I think that is a critical impact the pandemic has had in me because it has made me less afraid to showcase my personality for the sake of being liked. Ironically I have been to grow more as a person in a time of social distancing due to facing social pressures that cause me to hide in my shell. Hopefully, this positive development will be the one that I remember as I look back on this period in the future.

I want to end my reflection with an overall prediction for the future and my message to future generations. I predict that the virus will fundamentally transform how people conduct themselves in public spaces. Future works of literature, film, music, and art will reflect the anxieties, isolation, despair, and thoughts about death unleashed by the pandemic. I firmly believe that the probable long term economic depression from the pandemic will lead to large-scale armed conflict of some kind, which will drive the world to the brink of a third world war. It is, after which I think the world will begin to see the need for human solidarity and will lead to the development of effective global community to help humanity achieve greatness. I can be wholly wrong, and life goes back to the pre-COVID ways, but I feel that might not be the case. Future generations will undoubtedly face a crisis on par or worse than one I've been forced to live through. For those in the future reading this paper, I offer these words. Living through a crisis is a defining moment for your generation, as COVID was for mine. How you acknowledge yourself in relationship to the moment, in relationship to one another, and in connection to the world we inhabit will eternally be a part of you – both individually and collectively. Learn to trust one another because, in the end, one person can't face the pain and fear alone. Always maintain a spark of hope because hope is the only thing one can have in a time such as this.