

Dear students (and faculty and staff colleagues!),

In this time of uncertainty and change in the face of the pandemic, COVID-19, Dr. Jaudon, Dr. MacDonald, and Dr. Pfau would like to invite you to consider joining a virtual community to record your experiences. Our ordinary routines have been disrupted, and as a result, we're encountering new circumstances, creating new habits, shouldering new responsibilities, and inventing new ways to connect with each other. At the same time, we're reading and thinking across the disciplines as we try to make sense of this new situation. We follow trackers that predict the virus's spread; we look for information from doctors and scientists to guide our actions and explain what is happening; and we turn to scholars and culture workers to help us imagine what this all might mean.

Yet we aren't the first society to face a pandemic. From a historical perspective, we are reminded of the journal of Samuel Pepys, who recorded details about his experiences with the plague in London in 1666. His words allow us, more than three hundred years later, to imagine the experiences of sending family away to the countryside, worrying about "bad air," and becoming depressed by the number of new graves in the churchyard. At the same time, he made an effort to maintain a degree of normalcy, visiting with select friends and attempting to continue going about his business until the news of disease outbreaks became too close for comfort. From the scientific perspective, we look to what we know about the infectious diseases of the past and of today (influenza, cold viruses, Ebola) while relying on new technologies for the development of vaccines and treatments. We hope for robust predictive models that can help us track viral spread and assist in the recommendations developed to aid countries across the world in managing the outbreak. Our hope is that journaling the daily experiences of social distancing as well as the dramatic moments will provide all of us with a better understanding of what the pandemic of 2020 was like. We hope, too, that sharing these experiences will help us feel closer to each other even as we have to stay apart.

We would like to ask you to chronicle your experiences during this time in some form of private (or public) journaling. In addition to recording your daily life, we will provide you with a weekly journal prompt to focus some of your writing. Each week, we will solicit submissions for a group blog to be hosted on Medium.

We would be very happy for you to join with us in this experience. Please let us know by Friday, April 3 if you are interested (send a quick note to jaudon@hendrix.edu).

Wishing you all well,

Toni Jaudon, Laura MacDonald, and Sasha Pfau