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2020

Corona Letter 1 (Undated)

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Recommended Citation

Swiencicki, Jill, "Corona Letter 1 (Undated)" (2020). *Cardinal COVID Journal: Prose*. 7.
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Dear Students,

It is another chilly, dark, damp day in Corona Quarantine. This morning my husband made biscuits and we cooked some Canadian bacon and some eggs, and we got the kids up for breakfast. Spirits are lagging in our house, so we went around the table and answered the question, “how will we not let this day fizzle out and amount to nothing?” Everyone set some goals, and here is mine: to reach out to you and send along some information before I settle in to comment on student writing. Then I will take a 2 hour walk, just like Henry David Thoreau used to do. Then I will clean every surface in my home, as I do every day.

Here is the main news I am reporting: you will now have an option to select a final course grade of Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory for this course. Yesterday Fisher faculty in Arts & Sciences had a Zoom meeting and voted for this option for select courses only. You will be getting a letter about this, so watch for it. For our purposes, the situation is simple: if I give you a final grade, and it is passing, but you don’t “like” it, you can opt for a grade of “satisfactory” to show up on your transcript. Obviously if your final grade is an A, why would you do that? Keep the A and let it shine brightly on that transcript of yours. But if I give you a C for your final grade, you might want to request the “Satisfactory.” See how this will work? Grades of D- or lower are exempt from this privilege. So, that is some news that should take some pressure off as you complete these final assignments.

I will be hosting drop-in Zoom office hours, once I figure out what that sentence means. I think Friday morning might be a good time, from 10-11am. I’ll send you an email with the Zoom meeting invitation once I figure out what that sentence means. Honestly, I am not cut out for online teaching. I like seeing you all, I like making living energy, breathing among thinking people, and I don’t like being chained to a computer. Would Zoom office hours be something that you would like and take advantage of? Write and let me know.

I'm going to sign off now and head into Blackboard. Be well, students. Be your best self. Get out for a long, long walk. Help others. Clean every surface in your home multiple times, and wash your hands more than you ever thought possible. New York is the epicenter of the virus with 25,000+ cases, and we have not reached the apex of infection. We are sheltering in place and waiting for the large scale infections to crest, and then pass. This will take time, especially because there are a lot of bozos not complying, and we are getting mixed messages from non-experts. So we need to be patient, watch Governor Cuomo's daily press briefings, and challenge ourselves intellectually.

Actually, I will provide extra credit to anyone who selects a Cuomo coronavirus press briefing and does a rhetorical analysis of his speech. You can do it on video or write it up. Cuomo's rhetoric is masterful and very old school. It has been of the pleasures of my days to listen to it and deconstruct it. On your walks consider listening to The Daily podcast to get daily updates on the news globally. Also consider ordering a pack of Dutch Blitz, my new favorite card game.

I loved seeing where you will be doing your work. The spaces ranged from a section of a sofa to a room with a view. All wonderful. I've included some photos of my tiny home office. This is where I write, where I read your writing, and where I dream of sunny, virus-free days to come.

Best,

Jill

