

## COVID-19

It started the week of March 9th. It was Monday, and I went to work and to my literature class like normal. I went home afterward and worked on some papers and did some reading. It felt like any other day, like any other week. It was 5:07 when President Cruzado sent an email describing how MSU canceled international travel. *Makes sense*, I thought to myself. It didn't affect me though and I carried on making supper. Wednesday, the 11th, President Cruzado sent another email saying that the National Conference of Undergraduate Research had been canceled, due to COVID-19 and MSU wanting to be a responsible community member. Thursday, the 12th, was the day that shook me the most.

On this day, all MSU students got another email, it had a PDF from Clayton T. Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education. In it was a series of decisions that would take place. Those decisions being that "as of March 23rd, all MUS campuses will, in every instance possible, transition all in-class instruction to online or other remote teaching modalities that do not require in-class presence," and that "MUS campuses will implement appropriate social distancing measures in line with CDC guidelines and recommendations". I received this email at 11:30 AM when I was in my Methods class. This was very unsettling because for the last part of class this was all we talked about. We didn't know how this class, in particular, would transition to being online, as we needed a lot of in-class experience with students. Our professor found out at the same time that we did, so there was no one prepared to answer our questions to the fullest extent.

After this class, I went to the SUB to work and have my lunch. However, I couldn't eat the lunch I had brought nor could I focus on working on homework. My stomach was in a knot and all I could think was *is this really happening?* I would look around the Union Market, where I had a table to myself, and it seemed like no one cared. Like no one noticed. It was baffling and I thought I was going crazy. I had three hours to kill until my next class, so I tried to watch movies on Hulu and I tried to work on papers. I really did. But I couldn't get over what was going to happen. A friend of mine swung by my table and we talked about what was happening. I felt better, knowing that she felt the same way I did. However, it only helped for the moment. At 2:45 I walked to my next class, which was Advanced Writing.

I was expecting to work on our project for the duration of the class, but when my professor walked in, he seemed flustered and overwhelmed. I realized then that I was not, in fact, overacting. For the duration of our class time, we talked about all that had happened from Tuesday to Thursday. We tried to figure out as a class how we could shift everything online. Many people spoke and made comments, and I would have, had I not been so floored. I sat in my usual spot in the back, with a table to myself. I had my feet up in another chair, and my arms were crossed. I could hear everything being said, but I was looking out the window and toward the trees. I could feel the sun on my legs, which was warming me. I could see the wind blow the tree branches. I had this moment where my brain could not stop thinking and I was at the point where I wanted to scream. I wanted to stop the world if only for a moment, to process what I felt and why. My inner turmoil made me want to cry and lash out. My face, body language, and

behavior gave nothing away. I didn't want to look at anyone because I knew my eyes would give everything away.

When class was over, I moved slowly to grab my coat and backpack. I took my time leaving the class, knowing it was my last time in it. I walked to my car, his name is Charlie, by the way. I got in, started him up, and drove home. At that point, I lost it. I let the tears fall, and the heaving sobs out, in the company of Charlie. I got home and let my dogs out, and I took some medicine for the headache I was getting. I called my Grandma and told her what was happening. I talked with my husband about it once he got home. I thought I was fine after I got to talk about it with them. I was able to get some of my feelings and fears out to other people. The weekend was fine since my husband was with me and we ran our errands. The next week, the 16th of March through the 20th, was spring break.

I voluntarily stayed home as I got more emails from MSU, saw the reports on the Bozeman Chronicle, Billings Gazette (I am originally from Billings), and from all over the world. News reports from Washington, California, Italy, etc. I saw it was getting worse. I wasn't worried about me, but of the people around me. I was worried about the elderly and the sick, so I stayed inside. I didn't have anything to do anyway so I worked on homework, watched TV, ate and slept. I would go see my horse, Malt, which helped keep me sane. My husband and I went grocery shopping once, on the 19th, but otherwise, I stayed in. On my ventures out, though, I saw more people than I expected.

I thought that everyone would be staying inside, if they could, to help the situation. That's what I was doing, so why wasn't everyone else doing the same? There were four cases of COVID-19 in Montana at this point, and the number has gotten higher. Into the teens, I think now. I just felt confused all over again. Was the issue serious? It seemed serious online and in all the news reports. But when I went out, it seemed like it wasn't a big deal. So, I asked myself, *am I overreacting? Am I helping? Am I being stupid for trying to help, when no one else seems to care?* The shopping trip with my husband was the hardest. He didn't understand why everyone was freaking out, why people were hoarding toilet paper, etc. He thought the whole thing was dumb and absurd. That's when I lost it with him.

We were parked at home, in our truck. I tried to explain to him that older and sicker people were dying. That COVID-19 was traveling fast and that Montana was trying to be proactive in stopping the spreading of it. I told him my fears, my feelings, and through this discussion I couldn't help but cry. I couldn't help but bare myself, my inner turmoil, to my husband. He sat through the whole thing silently. After some time had passed when we both hadn't spoken, he squeezed my hand and looked at me. I looked back and could understand that he hadn't thought about it from my perspective. My perspective of being an MSU student as well as an employee. It is now Sunday the 22nd, and I am working on campus tomorrow.

I am a groundskeeper, and one of the only students left. It feels weird, at the moment. MSU doesn't want any students coming back if they don't have to, so why am I working? On the other side of things, I am glad I still have my job. I have things I need to pay for. However, the

main reason why I am happy to still have my job is for the routine. The schedule of doing something every day. I need that grounding, otherwise, I fall into the walls of my home and wonder about what is wrong and what is right at this moment. There isn't a moment that goes by when I don't feel flustered because I want to help others, but to help others I need to stay home.

I came back to this document from where I left off. I had a job, a routine, and a schedule I was looking forward to. I wrote that this morning, around 11 AM or so, on Sunday the 22nd. I came back home at 5:14, with a text message from my boss, Jim. The message from Jim said "I just got told that we are to hold off on having any students return to work starting tomorrow AM (Monday the 23rd). I will keep you updated as soon as I know more". Now I feel even more flustered. I am partly relieved that I don't have to be on campus. I don't have to be around people or high trafficked areas, and I think MSU's double standard is dealt with. However, I am now even more stressed as I don't know if or when I will work again. How am I going to pay for my horse's stall rent? My dog's food? What about my cat's food and litter, and my own groceries and bills? I made some money this month, but not enough to cover everything in April. I feel defeated, stressed, angry, sad, and so many other things.

It is now 5:20, and I need to remember to breathe. I am better off than most people, and for that I am grateful. So, I will take my breath, probably have a beer with my husband, and try not to worry, at least for tonight.

It is Thursday, March 26th at 6:58 PM. I just got back from seeing my horse, Malt. He is a dark brown quarter horse, with a black mane and tail. He has some white on his forehead, and light brown around his muzzle. He is gentle, sweet, and can also be spunky. I gave him his supper, some alfalfa pellets, joint supplements, calf manna, as well as some supplements to maintain his coat, mane and tail, and his hooves. I also put a chopped up carrot in, to make it special. I mixed it all together with some water, to help soften the hard pellets. I could hear him nickering to me and I couldn't help but smile. I opened his gate and walked into his stall, and before I could put his black tub of food down he had grabbed a mouthful. I set his tub of food down in the right hand corner, and he went on eating, swishing his tail happily. It is these little moments that I will cherish forever. These little moments help keep me steady, grounded, and sane.

Once I got home and checked my phone (via email, FaceBook, text messages) I found out that Governor Bullock issued a "shelter in place" order, that will last until April 10th. This order is supposed to help Montana stop the spreading of COVID-19. However, all it has done for me is make me feel even more trapped. I understand the necessity for it, and I want to help in any way that I can. But the fact that this issue is so ordered is what worries me. The situation is bad and will most likely get worse. I understand the measure, as two friends of mine have tested positive for having COVID-19. However, it doesn't make me feel any better.

I have my ups and my downs, just like everyone does. I'll wake up, feel motivated to work on homework and I do, then I'll stop for lunch. That is when the weight of everything comes back. I don't want to work on homework, but I don't want to be lazy, so I'll clean my

house. That helps for a bit, and I'll go back to working on homework or watching TV. Every day though I struggle with finding the motivation to work on homework. It doesn't seem worth it, or meaningful, with all that is going on at the moment. I can't seem to put my phone down, as I am constantly checking for news reports or updates of any kind. At this moment, I think I will stop. My head is starting to hurt by worrying about everything and by thinking about too much, all at once. My heart feels heavy, as does my body. I feel down in the dumps, and cold. To help alleviate this pain, worry, and all around feeling poor, I will take a warm shower, drink a kettle of tea, and cuddle with my dog and cat. Until next time.

It is Monday, March 30th, at 5:40 PM. Over the weekend, my mouse, Mr. Jingles, passed away. It was a hard night, as I wasn't expecting him to pass away. The weekend progressed and I started feeling better. My husband was with me through the weekend, which helped. Today though, was really hard. I woke up, and did some yoga, then I took a shower. From there I ate breakfast and worked on some homework. It was some minor work, easy things that I didn't need to think about. That's all I want to work on these days. Homework that doesn't make me think, that is easy to bullshit and get a grade. After that I went and saw Malt. I saddled him up and we worked on some behavioral problems and rode down the road. We walked in tight circles, backed up, went forward, and did it all again and in both directions.

After that we rode back to the barn, where I unsaddled him. We went into the indoor arena and we worked a bit more on disengaging his hind end. Basically that means that wherever I turn I want him facing me. It is good practice and keeps him focused on me. I got his supper together and fed him in his stall, and drove myself home. Once home, I sat with Charlie, my car. I didn't want to face an empty apartment. I didn't want to go home alone. Today has been hard, harder than the rest. I am missing people, a routine, the sun, surprisingly. I can feel myself going down this rabbit hole, this hole of darkness. I don't want to get up, because I have a day of loneliness to face. I don't want to work on homework because it isn't meaningful. It feels like busy work. Like no one cares. So why do it? Why does it matter? I hate that I have to work on things. If I don't work and try to keep up, then I will fall behind. If I fall behind, I'm not sure what I will do. I stress over the fact that I need to work on things when I'm not, and it's just a vicious cycle that goes over and over and over again.

All I want to do is sleep. I eat because I am bored and I watch TV for something to do. I work if or when I feel like it, which isn't often or for very long. I feel alone until my husband comes home. I don't know if I am being a baby or if I am falling into some kind of depression. I don't think I've ever had depression, or really been depressed, but if this is what it is, or is similar to it, then it is absolute hell and I wish all who have it to get better, if they can. I wouldn't want anyone to have this, or anything worse. I feel a headache coming, so I will go, once again. I will take some medicine and cuddle with my husband, while I have him, before he goes to work in the morning.

This morning, the morning of April 1st, I actually went to work because it had snowed. I got the call around 4, and was at the shop at 5. I worked until about 9:30. The thing that I kept

thinking about as I shoveled snow and continued to watch the snow fall, was that it was beautiful. It was the wet, white, fluffy, heavy snow that is perfect for building snowmen. It was heavy on my back, arms and shoulders, but it was beautiful. The way it came down, and piled up was calming. I shoveled snow for the entrances at North and South Hedges, Gallatin College, Madison and Jefferson dorms, Yellowstone, and also Roskie. A two hour job took me four and a half hours because there was so much snow and it just kept falling. Silently, gently. I was covered in snow from head to foot, as it stuck to my clothes. Almost like the snow was hugging me.

I am now writing at my desk, it is 1:33 at the moment. I am sore in my hips, as I must have used them a lot to shovel around half a foot of snow at every entrance. I need a hot bath and some Epsom salts to help the soreness go away. But I don't want it to go away just yet. I am currently reveling in the fact that I got to go to work. That I got to work in one of my favorite types of weather, the snow. The peaceful, calming, beautiful snow. It helped me realize that COVID-19 will not be here forever. It might feel like it, as the days seem to take longer to pass since I am not doing as much as I was before it came. But, like the snow, it will melt, dissipate, in one way or another. It does not bring joy, and so we hope that it will never come back. The snow, however, came back. And for that, I am grateful because I got to go to work. I got to see the beauty of snow, and of the world, once more while everyone was sound asleep. The day felt like any other day, and in that moment where everything felt normal, I was at peace and had a smile on my face, as I shoveled the snow.

Today is April 8th and the sun is shining. It is currently 47 degrees, around 11:50 in the morning. I am in the middle of a Zoom meeting with classmates of mine from my Studies in Major Authors class. It is nice to see their faces, and we've had a few good laughs. I've been working on my philosophy seminar's final paper too. It's about COVID-19 and the media, specifically how the media is filled with misinformation about what's going on. It goes deeper by using Foucault and his biopolitics, essentially explaining how the media is a form of biopower that is controlling the public and the public's reaction. I also mention the consequences of misinformation, which are fear and paranoia. It is currently in the rough stage of writing, as I basically just read a shit ton of articles and then word vomited onto the paper.

I found it to be easier than anything else for that class, as it is relevant to the situation and to myself. It is helping me cope with how I feel and why I feel the way I do. The purpose of the paper is to critique how the media has been handling the COVID-19 pandemic. But it is a critique that is based on Kant, and more towards Foucault. It is a historical account of the media and COVID-19. I have until May to finish it, so I have plenty of time to finish it. My professor for that class is super awesome, as she is very supportive and understanding with everything that is going on. My methods class is going pretty well, I am almost done with the final assignment and I have one other major assignment for that class. My practicum class is easy, and nothing big is happening. This seems to be the thing I want to work on the most. It has the most meaning for me as well as for others, I think.

It is 5:10, April 8th still and it is 58 degrees. I just got home after my three hour trip to the barn. I saddled up Malt and made him trot and lope in circles on a lunge line. Loping is a term used to describe a slow gallop, if you will. A lunge line is a rope with a snap on the end so he has more room to run in a circle around me. We did this for an hour. Trotting and loping, in both directions. Malt is having some issues bending when he lopes in a circle, he is a bit stiff and doesn't want to turn to the right as much as I would like him to. After the running for an hour we rode down the road to relax a bit and work on his tight turns. He gave me some trouble, but that was to be expected. After that we went back into the indoor arena and ran some more. It might sound like a lot of running but he needs a job and I'll be out there again tomorrow.

I gotta say, today feels like any other day. And I suppose it is. COVID-19 has kinda become a part of life, and I have accepted that. I am going about my days pretty normally now, and I try to make it out to the barn once every day. I am going back to working on campus on April 13th, and that will only help me feel better. I don't really feel scared, or angry or sad anymore as COVID-19 becomes a part of my life. It might not be for long, hopefully anyways, but for now, I am learning to live with it. I see my horse, do my homework, and run my errands quickly whenever they need to be done. I stay 6ft or further away from people and I have softball to look forward to. My father in law is sponsoring my team, and my husband and I have everything almost in order. We will be the TKjams Rams, and I am really excited to start in May, hopefully. That seems to be helping me a lot. Practicing with Tj and looking at gear and making our team shirts. It gives me something to focus on.

At this moment, 5:20PM, I am listening to music and drinking beer. I have a meeting soon so I should get going. Until next time my friends.

Hello! It has been a while, and I'm sorry about that! It is April 14th at 4:27, and I just got home from traveling to Billings, MT to visit my Grandma. I went to work yesterday, Monday, and it was great being back. It was around 8 in the morning when I had the brilliant idea to visit my Grandma and stay overnight. My heart was beating fast, I couldn't stop smiling or thinking about it, so I called my husband and told him of my idea. He laughed and said to have fun. After work I put a bag together and grabbed my dog, Caspian, and away we went! We listened to music and I was giddy to get there. Once there, I hopped out of my car and ran up to the door. My Grandma and Papa had no idea that I was coming. I knocked on the door then walked inside, Caspian found Rosie, my Grandma's golden retriever puppy, so I went and let them out the back.

My Papa came up the stairs cause he heard the commotion, and he couldn't stop smiling. "Carol, you better come up here" he said with a grin. I yelled "Grandma!" and I could hear her come up the stairs a little faster. Once her head popped into view I said "Hi!" and she got all excited. She basically ran up the stairs and we hugged. I could tell she was close to tears and that she didn't wanna cry in front of me. We chatted about my idea to come up and visit, since my days were gonna be pretty mellow and that my trip would be a short one. We went to the kitchen and talked more, I caught her and Papa up on my life and school. We talked about the dogs as

they played in the backyard. Later that day we had supper from Sandee's, which is a neat little burger place. Cheap, greasy, delicious burgers with tater tots!

My cousin and his girlfriend came over for supper too, and we ate around 6 yesterday. They stayed until 11:30, which was crazy cause I thought they would've left earlier. However, I am glad they stayed! We talked about old times, childhood memories, life, and of course family and school. We always have heart to heart conversations at Grandma's house. Today Grandma and I stayed at the house and talked more in the kitchen. Papa came up and showed me pictures of the Thunder-Bird he is restoring, and talked to me about the process. I ate lunch there before I made the drive back today. I am glad to be home and I am glad that I made the trip. I really needed to see my Grandma and I think that she really needed to see me. She was planning on coming to Bozeman before COVID-19 hit, and since she wasn't able to make the trip I knew she felt bad. It was a much needed visit and helped both Grandma and I feel normal.

I go back to work tomorrow, which I am thankful for. It should be fun and relaxing. After work I will come home and work on school work. I should be done with classes in about two weeks or less, as my assignments are basically done and just need touch ups. I am starting to relax more as I get into this new routine of working on campus and working from home. It's funny how those changed. Anyways, I better get going as I have supper to make.