

RLST2071H (MYTH AND BELIEF) COVID RESPONSES

Final Discussion prompt: Please take a few minutes to update us about your thoughts about, or your individual experience with, the current global pandemic and social distancing.

Speculate about final wisdom that you think at least two of our founders could offer. Finally, what do you think will stick with you most about this class? What will you likely remember; did you change your mind about anything, etc.

Stevie Bergstrom

Covid-19 has absolutely shaken me. Working in a hospital, I am wearing my mask for up to 16 hours in a shift. At this point, you never know what will walk through the door. This used to be the most exciting part of the job, but at this point it feels as though you never know if this is going to be "it." Admittedly, I was among the first initially to say things like, "Haven't these people heard of the flu," or, "I'm healthy, it's ok." I've have come to recognize as mortality rates have increased, mass burials have commenced in places like New York city, and repeatedly getting emails that change life daily, that this is absolutely not a flu. The world has experienced epidemics before, and yet our country amongst several others were no more prepared to handle this now than 100 years ago, aside from scientific advances. Most disheartening is the fact that this has become political and there are people who have heard of deaths yet deny the "realness" of this illness.

Ultimately, I feel Confucius would have been an excellent guide during these troubling times. By focusing on education, we can give this bug the research and advancement it demands at a speedier rate. Rather than "leaving thigs to the experts," people would rely on the information they themselves uncovered. Confucius would not promote the use of Facebook or other unreliable mass medias, but would return to the library, as he did throughout his legend. He also would promote doing what is good for the other, and not simply yourself. This seems to have been dismissed somewhere along the way. I also feel that Jesus would be a beam of light in today's crisis. He walked willingly amongst the ill; perhaps Jesus is here as a nurse. He promoted unconditional love of thy neighbors; our "god fearing" nation is too busy classifying neighbors as liberal or conservative to worry about keeping each other safe. Most importantly, Jesus would see Covid as a parable, one to mill through your mind to process.

This class has been a joy and has challenged my religious ideals. I feel that being able to recognize the subtle differences amongst the vast similarities between these four figures has been really neat, and each step of the way begged the question of me: what are you looking for in a God? What is a myth, and what may have been real? I think understanding each religion more fully will help me with patients in the future and aide me in understanding their needs and ideals.

Payton Fielding

This current global situation has been a difficult time for me, however at the same time, I have many realizations and insight on the world and about my own self. In the beginning of the pandemic, I was

overcome with fear and uncertainty. I was afraid of getting sick, of my family getting sick, and of the world turning to a state of panic and chaos. As the weeks have progressed, I have been able to evaluate my own thoughts of fear, and turn them into a learning experience. We are seeing news of deaths throughout the world everyday, and it has made me think and really feel the importance of living everyday to the fullest. Even a few months ago, no one could have predicted this happening, and as morbid as it sounds, no one could have predicted the death of their loved ones. We all know we are going to die someday, but dying because of this unknown virus, is such a shocking and out of the ordinary experience. Because of all of these thoughts, I have really strived to appreciate other humans, while keeping my distance, and the beauty of every life that is currently being lived, has been lived, or will be lived. I wake up every morning grateful for what I have, and for my health and my friends and family, and also sending love to those who are being affected all around the world. If we compare this course to our current state, I immediately think of Confucius and how we was born into a period of turmoil. The period was effected by war, rather than disease, but I can relate the two because of the way Confucius (and now us in this day an age) choose to view the world and make it a place free of fear. I think one positive aspect of this time, is how we have the opportunity to reset and rethink our feelings towards other cultures, races, etc., to put our differences aside and realize that we are all human. It doesn't matter where we come from or what we believe in, we are all vulnerable. I think this fact also relates to one of my greater takeaways from this course. After reading and learning about our founders, I have noticed so many similarities within each belief system. Some of those being the necessity for humans to act humanely and for a greater good. After this course, I will always remember this fact, and remember that if I catch myself wanting to judge someone based not their beliefs, as we all have the tendency to do, then I will try to evaluate my motives and put facts behind before my superficial judgements.

I hope everyone is staying well through these difficult times!

Breana Kleppelid

Ever since the COVID-19 occurred it has been a very strange time! At first, (as in before quarantine and businesses shut down) I did not think it was that serious. I would just hear passersby talk about it on campus so much that I soon got sick of hearing the word "coronavirus". But of course, that was the beginning and the virus cases skyrocketed ever since. Transitioning to online courses that were supposed to be in class soon became the new norm. For this class simply nothing has changed considering it has always been online, but for other classes, I have some material that has gotten quite difficult to teach myself. Sometimes it has been a struggle with motivation because you do not have a professor lecturing you and giving you important information, you have to learn it yourself basically. I do miss being with and around the community, it has made me realize to never take for granted the beauty in community and socialness because we are social beings! I work at a pizza restaurant and we had to shut down the dining part but we still do to-gos and every weekend it is so busy we are making 2x more in tips then we had before quarantine! It is surprising how generous people become once coronavirus is taking over everyone's lives. So that has been an upside to this pandemic for me. The founder that made me think of this was Confucius because of his strong opinions on morals. What I thought of was the idea of humanness and benevolence (acting with awareness of the desires of others) involving Confucius or simply caring for others. I can tie this to the pandemic in the world today because

Confucius would want all of us to simply do our part (social distance) to care for others. If we all follow the rules even though it might be tempting not to. We should do it for the sake of our community and people because we are all in this together. We need to be aware of the importance of this virus and contribute our part to staying home to keep others safe and ourselves. Like Confucius, he believes in the goodness of human nature. Understanding human nature is important because it helps us understand how humans act and react the way we do. So I think Confucius would find this time very intriguing to see how some people act during this time. For example, some people are being extremely nice and I have witnessed others lashing out on essential employees who are putting their lives at risk so you can go buy groceries. Be nice people! Also, it's interesting to note the way you, your friends, family or strangers have reacted during this pandemic. Moral beings like Confucius and Buddha I think would agree and say to stay inside and decrease the curve because they both do not want to harm others and others to harm them either.

Finally what I am going to remember about this class is basic understandings on all of the founders and mainly their biographies and upbringings in their life that I can relate to and understand them in that light more than the beliefs they have. I had a good time during this course and learned interesting things about all these founders. Also I did enjoy the Confucius documentary the most out of this course.

Liam McFarlane

This current state of the social state within this country is unprecedented and I have had trouble coping with it day by day. The governor of my home state of Illinois just announced they will be extending their shutdown through the end of May, when I heard this I was stunned because of the phase 1 opening initiating in Montana so soon. I can try to justify it in my head because the metro population of Chicago is nearly 10x the population in Montana. Considering MT is also the 4th largest state in the country by area, coupled with the fact that there have been so few cases here relative to places like New York and I feel a lot better about it. In the back of my mind though I am concerned that this may make things worse, maybe we are over our hump, but it is still concerning to me that things may get even worse before they get better. Maybe the one good thing that this pandemic is doing is highlighting just exactly how incompetent our elected officials are nearly across the board. I understand that this situation is extremely complex and difficult to handle, but it is the job they campaigned for. After seeing the way money was distributed from this nation wide bailout it is clear where the interests of the politicians lie and that is not with the people, it is with these massive corporations who have been lining their pockets for years. That is extremely disappointing to me to see it happening live, I understand that letting these big corporations fail doesn't seem wise, but they can't survive two months without operating when their profit margins have been in the hundred of millions quarterly for years. They are the ones who should have some cash in the bank for emergencies, not taking 500 billion of the stimulus that could be going into American citizens pockets to help them deal with mortgages and health insurance. This \$1200 stimulus check will barely put a dent in an average families monthly expenses. It is a difficult situation for me to wrap my mind around because I am uneducated on the economy, but just observing the world over the past few weeks that is where I am at mentally.

As far as my personal experience I was laid off and currently remain unemployed, but hope to rejoin the workforce soon. It has been the first time in my life I have been out of work since I was in high school so

it has been difficult to manage time. I am fortunate to be in a situation where I have people around to keep company instead of getting stuck alone and for that I am grateful.

I think that Buddha and Confucius would be a couple great role models during these times because of their attitude toward not harming others and overall positive morality. Those two would encourage behavior for the greater good. Confucius is all about the golden rule and you would have to think about how you would want to be treated if you were an at risk person/living with an at risk person. If everyone was doing that we would be able to lock this country down in a heart beat. I think Buddha would be preaching that you need to be grateful for what you have everyday no matter how fucked up the situation is. Things are looking down but we are in this together as a community, a state, a nation, and a species. Everyday you have the opportunity to control the way you are handling the quarantine and the general state of chaos we have been perpetually in since the beginning of the year. It really boils down to your disposition and whether or not you make the choice to try and be positive.

My biggest takeaway from this class is that modern day christianity is a giant scam. I already knew that but, in reality all these religious leaders were spreading a variation of the same exact message which is just be a good person. There were obviously some differences in practice and belief, but the overarching theme across everything we learned was basically don't be a jag off.

I look forward to hopefully taking another course with Holly at some point because this was my second one and I have enjoyed everything about both courses so far.

Anonymous

This global pandemic we are in is something I never thought I would see in my lifetime. It has been overwhelming a bit and times have been uncertain. I was able to keep my job as we were deemed essential, but work wasn't easy. We had numerous call outs and long periods of self-quarantine because we are housekeepers for people traveling into the states and people got scared so work was long and stressful. Now we are slowing down, and we don't have enough work from the cancellations. My sons school also shut down so transitioning his schoolwork has been hard because he's used to a classroom setting. He has also been going stir crazy in isolation and makes it rather difficult for me to complete assignments because his energy is through the roof. Another thing that was stressful was when people hoarded and bought out the stores because I couldn't find anything I needed for the house. I also get the need to social distance and why it's important, but people treat you like you have the plague if your too close. It's just an interesting world we live in now and being a social butterfly, I am struggling with not being able to go eat out with family and friends and all the fun stuff before social distancing happened. We have managed to go out hiking and fishing a few times and that has helped keep us sane. I was also very shocked to see how poorly people were treating each other in some instances. This is a time people need to stick together not have the mentality of every man for himself.

There are two founders that I think would have so much guidance for us in this pandemic. Those two founders are Confucius and Buddha. I think this mostly because in my opinion these two founders are so moral and spread the need to not do harm to others. Confucius would say treat others the way you want to be treated and don't do things to them you wouldn't wish for yourself. Right now, people have not been doing what Confucius would say. People have been treating others terribly. I have especially

seen this in the grocery stores. Customers were yelling at the workers because items are limited for purchase. They should have been thinking about how it may feel working long hours on the front line and maybe how they feel in that moment. They should change the way they treat them over something they can't control. Buddha may talk about pleasure of the sense being evil and how we need to abandon the need for that. If we did, we would be happier. I think we see this a lot as people are stockpiling. People are buying way too much stuff trying to make sure their pleasures and wants are fulfilled but not thinking of how it affects others. An example is when the toilet paper was all gone, and people bought out all the baby wipes. Now these children must suffer with rashes and possible infection because their moms don't have what they need to take care of them properly. We could all take some wisdom from these two founders I'm sure to handle this pandemic much smoother. I have taken so much from this class! It opens so many doors in my mind to expand what I know or didn't know, and I really feel like I changed as a person and became more open-minded. I really enjoyed the things I learned about Confucius and I think I will carry most of that from this class. I really like his way of being a moral person and treating others fairly. It's been a pleasure to learn about these four founders and I am thankful to have learned about them during this period as I think they offer much guidance.

Stephanie Springer

This global pandemic has changed my life perspective both positively and negatively. It is crazy how life can be going about as "normal" and change within an instant. I heard about the possibility of this virus becoming a problem near the end of 2019. I shrugged it off, thinking that something like that actually happening in our world would be impossible. Little did I know that one day, it would all change our lives forever. I work a full time job 8am-5pm, Monday through Friday along with part time classes. I was feeling burnt out from non-stop "go go go!" and not having any time to do the fun college experience things. This slow down of pace has been a blessing in disguise to me. It truly was all I needed. The circumstances are scary and different than anyone has seen, but I needed a breath. I am an extrovert but even me staying busy, needed time away from normal life. It took time for me to adjust to no routine and going stir crazy in some moments. But this has taught me some valuable lessons.

Number one, be thankful for what you have NOW! In an instant, it can be gone. I miss my hugs, I miss my girl's nights, I miss my freedom to interact with civilization. It's like we want it all. The busyness, the quietness, the stress, but the relaxation. Anything we have, we want the opposite. This has taught me to live in the moment and take what you have to the fullest. I have been able to spend some quality time with my loved ones which has been amazing.

Number two, be kind. Be considerate. Be patient. Be loving. Be supportive. Be respectful. I experienced many people not caring about the current situation. I saw people partying, touching things, not respecting social distance. And this broke my heart. I know that young kids like us will not be nearly as effected as those susceptible, but many people did not understand the seriousness. Others, took this to the extreme. It is all about balance. Be kind by washing your hands. Be kind by smiling. Be kind by leaving a meal for someone. Be kind. Luckily, we live in such a community based place as Bozeman to experience love, care, and a serious support system.

So where am I going in all this? Our generation will never forget this. In fact, life will not be the same. I hope people become more aware of others. I hope people learn to be considerate. I hope people do not

forget what is important. Togetherness, in a social distant way. I hope people see the conveniences of this life and how BLESSED we are to have the thing we have. Sure, it's not convenient to not have the salon, the nail parlor, the mall, the movie theater, restaurants, and gyms available. But don't lose sight of the amazing valley we live in to hike, walk, and run around in! Others in this world have never had access to those. I hope this opens people's eyes and hearts to the immense blessing to live in the United States of America.

I have had a clear peace throughout this time. I know who is in control and who holds every single event in His hands. Jesus would take this event to quiet His heart before the Lord, pray for others, and be selfless for the world. Through his lens, I have been able to find peace. He would tell us, do not worry. Trust me. I have this under control. Everything he does for a reason. Just like any founder we have studied in this class, everyone can find peace in something greater than themselves. And yes, that may be different for everyone. Muhammad would take this time to continue his routine of prayer and meditation. This class has been amazing to examine different lenses in different religions. I am so thankful for the opportunity to study these beliefs.

Thank you!

Grace Werdel

The pandemic 'culture' has put a lot of things into perspective for me. I have had multiple breakdowns about how much the pandemic has changed our day to day life as well as how people have been acting. I am lucky enough to still be able to go to work, I work at Pickle Barrel, and that has made me feel a lot more appreciative and grateful for our community. People have been very generous and thankful for our services during this time and it makes going to work a lot easier. I think the pandemic has also revealed a lot about how we receive our information and what we deem to be credible. With all the statistics, preventions, and information coming out of every country it's hard to filter out what needs to be seriously considered and implemented into our lives, especially coming from a state that is lucky enough to have a smaller number of confirmed cases. But because we are a state with a smaller number of cases I think people in Montana are less willing to take precautions and preventions that the CDC and other reliable organizations have recommended. A lot of my friends aren't social distancing and still hanging out and going around town for nonessential reasons and it really infuriated me that so many people are changing their way of life to help flatten the curve and end the quarantine. I know that I really want to be able to enjoy this summer and go to concerts and visit friends in and out of town and that won't be plausible if people don't take those precautions now. Looking around the world I see so many countries completely shut down with no one allowed to go outside and it seems that the United States is going down the road and a lot of people don't seem to care. I think the pandemic has revealed a lot of American culture and the kinds of things that we want to represent and stand for. With that being said, the amount of positive support and conversation going on around the world is really uplifting and something that I try to focus more on. There's so much negativity and arguing going on that I started to get tunnel vision and so it's really important to remind yourself about all the good happening around the world and how many communities are rallying together. I get a lot of reassurance and support from my family and my co workers that makes me feel like there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

I think the founders would focus on self-reflection and the importance of truth and honesty. A fundamental element of a lot of religions is family, not just blood family but a general community family. I think that is really important to focus on, we all have contributions to make, big and small. With all the free time most of us have on our hands, this is a really good time to reflect on your life and goals and what you want to accomplish in the next few years. Because I'm graduating, this time has made me seriously think about where I want to go from here and what I would be happy doing. It's also made me evaluate how much stock I put in 'societal norms' like going to college and getting a four year degree. Is that important to me? Is it necessary for what I want to do right now?

This has been a really scary time for me but and made me really face and understand that some things are completely out of control and it's important to spread the word and inform others but you can only do so much and it's important to focus on yourself and what you can do.