

This whole semester has been quite chaotic. The pandemic has had major effects on school. I'd say things have changed more than they have stayed the same. To be frank, having school at home is a chore. Most people relax at home, and I enjoy doing so as well. However, having class at home feels so invasive. Like my work is intruding on my time to relax. Home is also not really a conducive work environment to me. Working at the library or at school really forced me to focus on the tasks at hand. Being at home, there are a plethora of distractions. I feel no pressure to concentrate on my work as well. In places where the people around me are working hard and studying, I naturally feel the need to conform. The environment helps me study. Meanwhile, I can not seem to find any motivation to listen to my professors when my sister is across the room relaxing and laughing at memes. During an exam, when I am in the midst of remembering what gray matter is, my mother will forget I am taking one and try to offer me fruit. The Wi-Fi spontaneously closes at times. It is all difficult to cope with.

We have been writing about New York or at least things tangent to New York throughout this whole semester. In this aspect, I think the topics that we have written about are all connected in some way. What has changed is the way we communicated in class. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly why not being face to face with other people or being in a classroom makes such a significant difference. I think the lack of being there in person takes away some engagement. I am sure some teachers might have difficulty teaching as well when they cannot see anyone's face. Another aspect that has changed with the pandemic is New York obviously. With the quarantining, the social distancing, and the self-isolating, a lot about New York has changed. Where New York was previously the loud center of diversity and

culture and people, it is now a dark, silent epicenter of the pandemic. Everything has been put to a screeching halt. Before campus closed, we read and wrote about E. B. White's essay on New York City. I had written in my essay, "Different groups of people coexist with each other, like varying gears coming together to form a well-oiled machine....In the essay, "Here is New York", E. B. White builds a relationship between the cold, clockwork-like parts of New York City and the people that inhabit and wander within them through his depictions of society". New York City was rambunctious, cacophonous, and high functioning, but this is not exactly the case anymore. The city that never sleeps has been completely knocked out; never say never, I suppose. Everything is eerily empty, and people are more cautious and distant than ever before. I wonder when the last time Times Square was completely void of humans was. And yet, through it all, this is a great example of how people are working together apart. A city with such a dense population is able to communicate so well and somehow keep so many people inside. It seems miraculous, but it proves resilience and that New York City is still a well-oiled machine in the time of the pandemic.

Overall, this semester has been quite an experience. At the beginning of the semester, some of my friends were forced to take an online psychology class because there was no room to open another in-person class. I will admit I was slightly jealous because taking an online class might have meant more time to sleep in the morning. However, now, I am not so sure I would want to take another online class. There is just something about it that is extremely lacking in comparison to a class in real life. Online classes lack weight and substance; they sort of slip through the cracks in my interest and concentration. Fortunately, I still got something out of every class. One of the readings I really enjoyed in this class was *Mythologies* by Roland

Barthes. His outlook on different aspects of normal life seem to twist reality and make me realize something new. It can be refreshing to question the things we consider standard or expected. Having you as a teacher has also been really lovely. Thank you for making writing something feasible for me. I have never really enjoyed my English classes until this and last semester. I think I have gained some confidence in myself as a writer, even though it could always be better. I hope to continue becoming a stronger writer.