

Young Kyung Min, PhD  
Program for Writing and Rhetoric

## **Overview**

I am originally from South Korea and teach in the Program for Writing and Rhetoric at CU Boulder. This project draws on my students' final projects of four sections of WRTG 1150 (First-Year Writing & Rhetoric) seminar that I am teaching this semester. Two sections are designed for international students and two sections are for native-English speakers. For the final project of our class, I asked my students to look into the impact of COVID-19 on their lives and their loved ones. This is a *Kairos* moment (emphasizing the characteristic of timeliness of an event) to be captured and reflected upon.

COVID-19 is a wake-up call. As a community, as a nation, as a planet, we've had to face enormous challenges that have shaken the very foundation of our human lives. The impositions of self-quarantine, cancellations of important events and meetings, closures of public gathering spaces, restrictions of national borders, and lockdowns of nations around the globe have led us to recognize a new reality that humanity is facing in the 21 Century.

We are in a completely unknown territory and are collectively learning how to adapt in order to maintain health and safety in a pandemic while still conducting our educational missions as well as our daily lives. In the midst of this global pandemic, we've come to know people around the world rising to the challenges in helping the public cope with the fears, confusions, and urgent disruptions in the spheres of finance, medicine, religion, education, politics, service industry as well as others.

In their final projects, my students explored how they've maintained their well-being in the midst of this global crisis; the examples they've seen that show the inspiring actions of people or communities rising to the challenge they are presented with; how we are collaborating locally, nationally and internationally beyond personal, political, ideological, institutional divisions and boundaries; what lessons we've learned in coping with the global pandemic and how we will respond appropriately in the future.

This project is a compilation of my international and native-English-speaking students' final projects in WRTG 1150 (First-Year Writing & Rhetoric) seminar. It showcases some snapshots of selected students' projects in a combination of visual images, drawings, and traditional essays.

## Tony Tang



As a college student originally from Wuhan, the epicenter of the breakout, the virus impacted my life particularly. I have to return home in the middle of my semester and follow a strict quarantine policy that ensures the safety of people around me and myself. Life has been a lot different, in terms of food, social activities, and travelling for Wuhan people. The city of Wuhan is in a total shutdown mode. Despite being a city of more than 10 million population, Wuhan was shut down by all means. Only people doing essential work were still working. The city is quieter than ever. This picture shows the spring of Wuhan. It was supposed to attract thousands of travelers all over the country to Wuhan when the flowers came out. But not for this year because of covid-19.



As we face this unprecedented catastrophe, we need to think rationally about human errors and failures, rather than blame and shirk. This disaster is a long way from the end, but this natural and man-made disaster also provides a rare opportunity for human reflection. At the end of this epidemic, maybe the whole world will finally understand that this is not the “China virus”, but the “world virus” that all countries must face together.

In this era of globalization, although the boundaries between countries are still clear, the virus will never stay within the borders of one country. More than ever before, we need to have a global vision and a global mind. We must learn how to work together to meet unprecedented challenges.

After the novel coronavirus has swept the world, this should not be a time for us to regain our isolation, but a new starting point for a different era of globalization. The world needs to unite stronger and show more love to others instead of hate and jealousy. This disaster may be bad for now, but hopefully it can be a *valuable lesson* for the next generations to come.

## Nicholas Hellmers

“In this final reflection I’ve decided to make two pieces of art in order to embody the traits of human beings that I have been noticing most recently. I decided to do this as I felt more confident in my abilities in order to express this through a picture rather than writing.” I call this piece “*Greed*” (right-hand picture). I found the inspiration for it while watching Michael Moore’s documentary “Planet of the Humans”. The reason why I can relate with the Coronavirus is because of the greed that has been exposed throughout these past months and it is just a visual representation as to how my brain pictures this situation of corporate greed and exposure. These unfortunate events gave a new perspective onto this dear world of ours and made me realize how sick we and our world find ourselves in.



As bad as the coronavirus was for me, I was able to find the light in the dark. Even Though, I found true hardships and some hard revealing truths, I did manage to find that people are still willing to fight and protect each other in times of struggle. I call this last piece “*Compassion*” (left-hand picture). I received the inspiration for this while thinking of my girlfriend, Abby. No matter how bad things got she was always my light, eager to clear my path and help me pull through this dark dream. Through this experience I can always remind myself that having faith in people is not a fool’s dream. This pandemic has hit me at a very vulnerable time in my life as I am still forging myself as a thinking human being, it has served as a game changer for me and shows a view of almost everything. I do not share the same enthusiasm I did previously for industry, but I exponentially increased the value I hold for family and friendships.



## **Ravin Chowdhury**

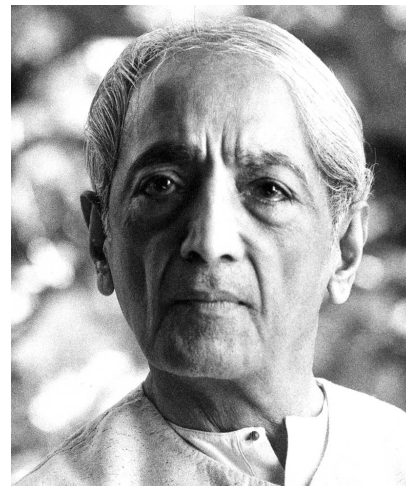
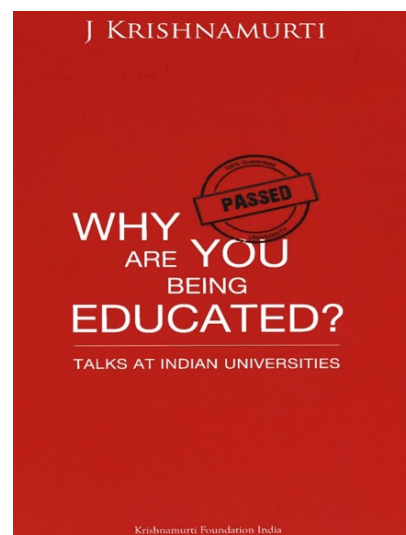
This has been a pivotal year for me. Along with it being the year of the Coronavirus outbreak that the world will remember it as, it is also part of what has been my first year of college, in a foreign land thousands of kilometers from my home country India. In this reflective essay, I ponder upon the closing act of my final freshman semester and exemplify the whirlwind rate at which changes taking place around the world have been affecting me



The above picture is my representation of my college experience in these trying times. This experience has both beaten me down and enlightened me to how privileged I have been and continue to be. In my final two years of high school, I was a student at Sahyadri School run by the Krishnamurti Foundation in India (his picture is on the right-hand side).

The second picture is of Jiddu Krishnamurti. Part of his philosophy was to think deeply about everything. “Why am I being educated?” was the final question the school asked me, right after I graduated, in the form of a book presented to me (the red book

below). Today, in the face of a COVID-struck college experience, this book has counselled me. This situation today has incentivized me to preserve my thoughts and experiences for my future self and offer my humble advice to those who are starting college like me. Several skills that I have developed this year will be essential to me for the rest of my life including, but not restricted to learning to interact with all kinds of people, being steadfast and making a habit of questioning everything. This year has clearly exposed the flaws we have in our society and I believe that many of the skills that college develops in us has the power to change it for the better.





## Spencer Halstead



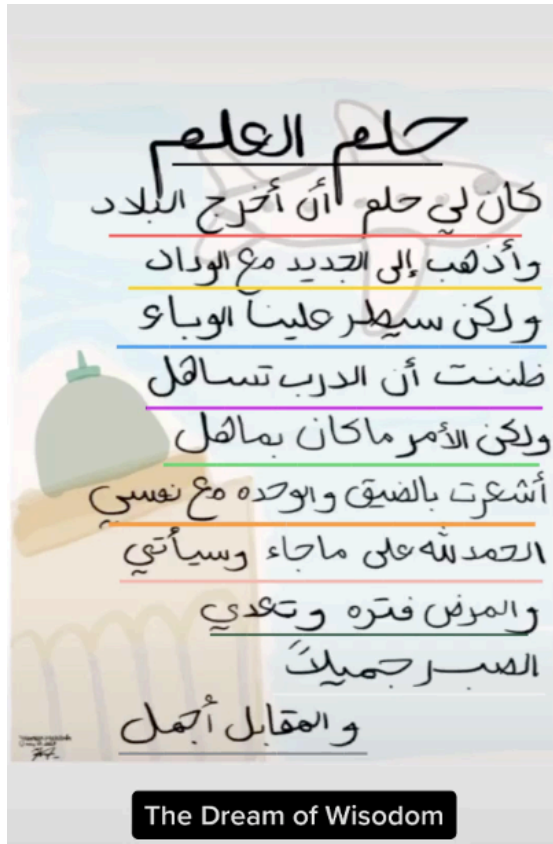
This accurately portrayed the ways I was able to cope and maintain during this COVID-19 pandemic. To others, these images are just four vinyl records and a basic guitar. For me, these pictures sum up what the latter half of my 2020 Spring semester looked like. Once the university decided to switch to all remote online classes, I was confused and perturbed about the direction my life was going to go in. At this point, I had been playing guitar for about 7 months, so I was fairly inexperienced with the instrument; but I have grown up with a prominent affinity towards all aspects of music.



As quarantine began to lengthen, so did my love for music. I began to progress the more I picked up my guitar, which helped improve my overall mental health. During the early months of quarantine, my life was centered around this love for music. I came to find many abstract forms of inspiration from the music I listened to.

These albums from the first picture have been very advantageous to me during the pandemic. They have provided me with accessible outlets for advancing my musical creativity, as well as keeping me mentally healthy and comfortable during these uncertain times. My love of music and guitar has only progressed during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been able to help me cope and prosper over the course of this catastrophe. I have now become very attached to my guitar and am thankful that I was able to find an outlet to fully express myself.

## Yasmeen Malallah



### *The Dream of Wisdom*

*I had a dream to leave my country  
And Leave to a new place with passion  
But the pandemic took us over  
I thought the path would be easy  
But the process wasn't flowing  
I felt sad alone by myself  
Thank God on what is  
And what will come  
And the disease is only a time that will pass  
Beautiful patience  
And the result is more beautiful*

**Note:** The colored background of text translations at the bottom correspond with the **Arabic** text underlined in the same color.

For my final project I decided to go with an Arabic poem written by me. I thought it was only perfect to mix my culture with my education and how these two perspectives beautifully collide. Learning is not just simply taking in information, but it is also giving information to those who provide it to you. Teaching those around you about where you came from and who you are as a person is also education, I decided to focus this poem on my writing class because my writing class was a great example. My writing class was filled with people from beautiful cultures and vibrant positive vibes.

As hard as it was to quickly adapt to remote learning, I was afraid at first to lose the college education experienced I dreamed of before coming to the United States. Yes, it was hard at first but as strong as we were to leave our families and travel abroad to continue education, we knew that we were stronger than an emotional breakdown on not knowing what's going to happen tomorrow.

We came together as one and lifted each other up with positive energy to get through each day. For me personally the shift was rather unpleasant because I loved my daily routine of being a college student. I woke up every day excited to go to school and express myself freely. My Poem in Arabic goes deeper into my feelings regarding school but keeping calm during the chaos was key to succeeded academically during my freshman year.

## Sidney Harvey



For my final project I choreographed a dance that embodies my internal feeling during the beginning of the pandemic all the way through the last semester. I have danced for 17 years of my life. Dance has always been my outlet and how I choose to express myself, making it the perfect way for me to process and deal with my feelings during the pandemic.

I chose the song “The Way I Do” by Bishop Briggs because I feel very empowered when listening to it. I feel that it is okay to go about things the way I choose to. This relates to my college experience because when dealing with coronavirus I had to go about it and deal in my own way to manage my feelings of anxiety and helplessness.

Another reason I chose that song is because some of the lyrics very much embodied how I was feeling. The songs say “you will never know all this pain, never know all this hurt,” this embodies how I was when my teachers did not understand my mental health state.

I felt like they didn’t understand the pain I was going through or they would have made attempts to help me. The lyric was very empowering to me because it makes it very explicit that no one knows how you are feeling, that those feelings are my own and can’t be compared to anyone else because no one but me can really understand the weight of what I was feeling.

When choreographing a dance, I used contrast of movement between sharp and smooth movement. The sharp motions represent the expectations placed on me from society and school and the smooth motions represent my feelings of being unable to manage my anxiety. I implemented this because it embodies how I was feeling when trying to manage school and my new feelings. I also included much emotion with my facial expressions and movement to portray how much I was struggling during this transition time.

This dance videos my emotions during the pandemic. Dance has always given me an outlet to express myself and process what I am feeling. I chose to choreograph a dance as my final reflection project to showcase my true thought and perspective gained through the transition to remote learning and the school board.



## Kandyce Sanchez



My picture represents a modern “The Scream” by Edvard Munch: seeing as it represents similar feelings of anxiety and fear. My art piece can also be seen to be similar to “The Scream” in terms of visual aesthetic. My art piece represents confusion and constant worry. As you can see, there is

I drew the twitter app logo incorporated in a circle above my head to convey a bird cartoon like imagery. The circling birds communicate society's feelings which can include a stunned feeling or even familiar feelings to seeing stars. In cartoons, often, the character gets knocked out and has birds encompassing their head and this is supposed to describe the character going

crazy or cuckoo. I used the twitter app logo to represent how all of the articles I read on twitter make me confused as well as give me the feeling of anxiety and stress. This is also the main social media app I have used throughout the COVID-19 stay at home order. It keeps me entertained and sane; packed with numerous funny memes to make light of the stay at home order. However, it is crucial to remember that too much use of this app is not beneficial nor helpful to building memories with family, friends, or even focusing on personal hobbies.

It demonstrates my generations obsession with the need to receive personal gratification through likes on social media. It represents the addiction that many, me included, have to phones and social media. COVID-19 has had a great impact on my social media use. The earth and galaxy are meant to demonstrate an out of this world experience with COVID-19. It is meant to demonstrate feelings of entrapment within my own world, seeing as I am stuck in my own head with an array of feelings and thoughts including different topics; isolation being a big one.

Feelings of isolation and addiction to social media were a wakeup call and COVID-19 is a time of clarity and reflection. With the current state of our world, it can be easy to get in the headspace I have painted. Central to this art, it is important to try to steer away from individual feelings of entrapment and isolation. We are not isolated, in fact, we are all in this pandemic together and we must maintain connections with each other. COVID-19 involves physical distancing, not social distancing.

## Sophie Cabral



For this painting, I used gouache on watercolor paper. I chose to paint these two mountains to show how my scenery has changed in going to CU Boulder. Mt. Tamalpais, or Mt. Tam, has beautiful hiking trails, with creeks that run through the base.

To the right is the beach, which can also be hiked to from Mt. Tam. I was always excited to come back to my beautiful home in California, but I didn't know it would be this soon. I feel myself longing to see the Flat Irons, and I wish I had hiked Chautauqua one last time before I left.



Where I live, the beach is never empty. Be it a foggy winter day, or a hot Saturday in the summer, you will always find people there. Recently, of course, that has not been the case. The state has closed all the beaches, which don't get me wrong, I think this is a great idea, but it is almost dystopian to see them completely empty.

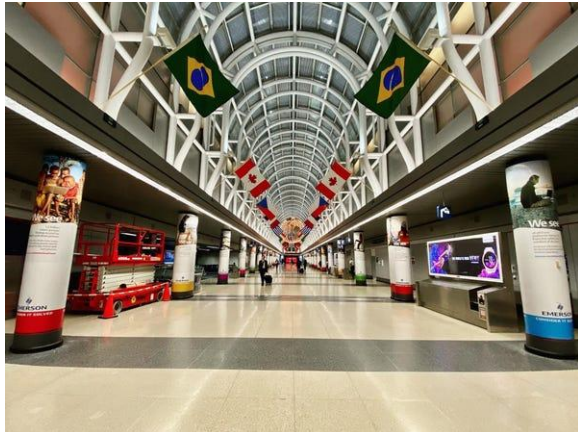
To conclude, I painted these three pictures to illustrate how my life and the lives of people globally have become completely different from how they used to be. All we can do as a world is adapt, be smart by social distancing, and staying connected and helping one another through this time.

Though it may seem like just another problem that has occurred in my lifetime, I am not seeing it as unimportant. All of the events I mentioned at the beginning of this paper are extremely important. Some are awful, like 9/11, and some push for positive change, like Greta Thunberg is.

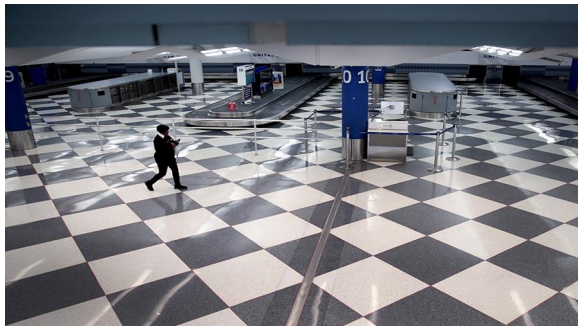
We must learn from this time and see how we can improve the wellbeing of everyone's lives, either nationally or globally to make sure that if this ever happens again, we will be prepared and persevere.



## Tuqa Al Hajri



My family and I packed our stuff as fast as we could and hopped on the plane. Our flight was from O'Hare International Airport where the airport was closed except for one airline that we were traveling in. It was strange seeing one of the busiest airports so abandoned by travelers and from workers. We had a layover in Qatar international Airport, which was even emptier than O'Hare, with a small number of people walking through there.



My Vision for college education has changed because of remote learning. Now, I believe that you don't need to be in a physical classroom to learn and gain new information, you can be in your bed wearing your pajamas and still work toward your higher education. The only thing that could cause a problem is motivation and time-management.



Traveling from the USA to Oman, I had the chance to personally explore how both countries dealt with the virus. On April 8th we got an email from the embassy of Oman telling us that if we want to go back there would be a private plane taking us back the next day, and the Omani airport would be opened for one day only for this plane, then the borders would be closed.

In the end, our views and beliefs are ever-changing, you cannot hold on in one view without it changing through time, and my definition of a college education has truly changed in the past month or so.

Now I believe that education can be achieved from the comfort of your home without being physically in a class with human interaction with teachers and classmates. This change in view happened because of COVID-19 that forced us to be in quarantine, and although it was hard for me to adjust to remote learning, I still found some positive aspects that I ignored before. I was able to spend more time with my family, and I was able to have more time for myself to meditate, distress, and take care of my mental wellbeing.