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## Honors College\_Honors 112 Class "Screw this Virus"\_Examination & Essay Responses

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David Brooks Final Exam Question (thank you, Sharon)  
Excerpts from student responses  
Katie Quirk's precepts

\*\*\*I believe all of the following students have given permission for their work to be quoted and attributed to them, unless otherwise noted. Nevertheless, I need to double check permissions if the College decides to use any of these quotes. Thanks.

**Tamra Benson:**

- Shares stories of working from the back of her car at home in order to find quiet during remote instruction.
- Provides several astute insights about lessons learned from Hon 111/12 texts and their relevance to the pandemic, including the need for philosopher kings/queens to advocate for and educate people held down by suffering and the potential for growth in times of crisis.
- “The CoVid-19 pandemic is causing grief for millions of people, all around the world. But while those who are suffering the worst are focused on survival, it is the responsibility of those who are healthy and capable citizens, to pay attention, so as not to let the vulnerable be taken advantage of by greedy politicians and misleading media while they are in this state of crisis. It is important to view this crisis as an opportunity for growth. The pandemic has surely brought several issues into the light. For example, the pandemic has demonstrated several problems with healthcare systems, as well as highlighted pre-existing problems, such as poverty and the looming climate crisis. If members of society stay aware, and keep their heads in this crisis, they can not only avoid political corruption and manipulation, but also use the crisis as an opportunity to improve the societal problems which have been highlighted by the crisis. They must journey through the darkness in order to find the light.”

**Stephanie Tillotson:**

- “All of these texts demonstrate different aspects of our current human experience, including the hopelessness of a bleak and repetitive future in *The Odyssey*, the leap of faith into the complete unknown by Noah and the Apostles in *The Torah* and *The Bible*, the uncertainty of self that Dante reflected in *Inferno*, and the long period of waiting for what would eventually be with Micheangelo's David. The sudden change of life as we knew it revealed the fragility of the plans we make for ourselves, resembling a massive domino effect where all the time and care spent setting up the dominos can easily be undone by a small nudge or rush of wind. The complete control we thought to have had over our lives and what will happen next has come to be a facade. By shattering the facade and our futures essentially becoming a constant GPS recalculation, the newfound appreciation and gratitude we will have for the simple things that we used to take for granted—long hugs, a firm handshake, small talk about the weather—might just be exactly what we needed.”

**Judy Bentivegna:**

- “When I learned that I would have to stay home and basically do nothing all the time, I was not even phased. I was torn apart to be leaving my school, my friends, my professors, my *home*, but I did not think that the quarantine part of it would be that difficult. If being home has taught me one thing, it is that I am not meant to live in a household full of people. I love being home, doing my thing, just knowing that the silence will last until I break it. My family is loud. My house is small. Quarantine is anything but quiet.”

**Nicole LaPlant:**

- “The only benefit I have found in general from this horrible situation, is that people are being friendlier towards each other. The reason I came to UMaine, was because the people there are so much nicer than here in Connecticut where I live. In Maine, you can drive down the road, and people wave. Or while walking on campus, if a person drops something, the person passing by will help. In Connecticut, people rush through their lives ignoring everyone around them. But, now when I go for my runs, people wave to me, and if I am out on a walk, people I pass will start conversations with me, or smile and wave.”

**Sophia Suriano:**

- “Brooks’ comment about social solidarity calls to mind the myth of *The Corn Mother* from last semester’s *Native American Myths and Legends*. The idea of working actively toward the common good and the description of “Plague eyes” fit in perfectly with the setting and characterization within the tale.”
- “Virgil’s *Aeneid* also aligns with Brooks’ initial insight: the importance of the common good over one’s own personal desires. Throughout the epic, Aeneas and his crew are struck with tragedy: their home sacked, every attempt to go back thwarted, and each new settlement bombarded with bad omens and plagues. Aeneas and his people are suffering, and as their leader he has to take the brunt of it. He sees through what Brooks describes as “Plague eyes,” a vantage point where the world one’s in is plunged into chaos, and the priority becomes preserving the life of one’s people over anything else. Plague eyes have seen wanton destruction and know the value of things others in complete safety take for granted. Through plague eyes, one can see the beauty of a sunrise more clearly, the taste of a warm meal becomes richer, and the everyday interactions with others become priceless. The common good becomes the new goal to work towards-- and Aeneas works to benefit the population as a whole in order to do right by them and preserve his people. Aeneas sacrifices true love and his own life for his people, all so they can return home and be safe. He leaves Dido to help the Trojans find a new home against both of the lover’s interests, leaving Dido to kill herself out of anger and heartbreak. He risks passage across the sea to return to Italy despite numerous failures. He journeys to the underworld, seeing the suffering souls of the dead and reuniting with his murdered father’s spirit, all to hear a prophecy ensuring his people will be safe. Brooks’ social solidarity is strong within Aeneas’ Trojans. They stick together and protect each other, despite every tragedy and mishap. They sacrifice their own wants, such as stability or a family, for their people. Their unity keeps them alive and strong throughout the epic, and Aeneas’ constant work toward the common good leads them home, and after a battle between Aeneas and Turnus, they are finally safe and avenged.”

**Annabel Zlatich:**

- “It’s not all bad. My floor from the dorms decided to start a discord forum so we can stay in touch. All hours of the day there’s someone on the forum, helping each other study for quizzes, binge watching cult classics like the Shrek franchise, and playing an ungodly amount of minecraft. Recently we quizzed each other on integrals for Calculus whilst defeating a Wither skeleton in Minecraft, quite the task for 2 am. Social Solidarity is a challenge, and I’m ready to start sitting down at restaurants again but taking on new hobbies helps to break the walls of insanity isolation has built up.”