

"It's Corona Time"
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In *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, Alison Kafer asks “What would it mean to explore disability in time or to articulate ‘crip time’?” (25). This project seeks to answer her question, but in the context of the global coronavirus pandemic. Millions of people around the world are being advised, or forced, to self-isolate inside their homes for an indefinite amount of time in an attempt to “flatten the curve” of COVID-19 infections. The hope is that by reducing the spread of the disease while scientists work on finding a vaccine, hospitals will not be overwhelmed by patients and forced to triage care due to a limited supply of ventilators and other medical supplies.

Self-isolating has proved to be very difficult for different reasons for different people. For myself, self-isolating meant being evicted from my college dorm at Vanderbilt University just two months before graduation. As students vacated campuses across the country, many struggled to find alternative living arrangements and adjust to online classes, or “distance-learning.” Professors had to transition their classes online and make syllabus adjustments in a matter of days. As the hours and days passed, we received multiple emails from Vanderbilt officials: classes were cancelled for the week, the dining halls are closing, move out of your dorms, graduation has been postponed until 2021, and so on. We were forced to say goodbyes and many decided to ignore social distancing guidelines to have dinner and gatherings with friends whom we may never see again. There was a whole lot of confusion and frustration in those first couple of weeks of March.

Across the country, local governments, states, and the federal government all responded to the crisis in various ways and with differing levels of urgency. Non-essential businesses were ordered to close and those who could work from home began doing so. Everything from class, to business meetings, to social gatherings were now being conducted virtually through Zoom. Who would have thought that we could manage to spend even more of our time online?

I struggled (and continue to struggle) to complete my classwork online and keep up with my job assignments virtually. Everyday, I feel like I have to fight to convince myself that keeping up with my work is valuable, despite the fact that thousands of people are dying, millions lack access to food and the ability to pay bills, there is a looming global recession, and all of this seems to have no end in sight. At first, coronavirus was deemed the “great equalizer” because it could infect anybody at any time. Everyone was thought to be equally vulnerable. Unfortunately, we’ve seen that this is far from the truth.

People with underlying health conditions such as hypertension and diabetes are at increased risk for dying due to COVID-19. People living in low-income areas and communities of color are dying from this virus at a disproportionate rate due to systemic classism, racism, and ableism. States are having to outbid one another for essential medical supplies because of the federal government’s failure to coordinate a response plan to the pandemic. Persons deemed “essential workers” like grocery store clerks, cashiers, delivery drivers, warehouse employees, and others are being forced to put themselves at risk daily with no hazard pay and often no paid sick leave. It’s hard to write an essay for class when it feels like the world outside is falling apart.

The field of disabilities studies, and its more radical offshoot crip studies, is filled with important scholarship that examines the temporality of disability. According to Alison Kafer, one simple definition of “crip time” is to recognize that some people need “more time” than others. For instance, someone with a disability might need more time to complete assignments for school. Someone else might face ableist barriers (like a lack of wheelchair access on public transit) that make it difficult for them to get to places punctually. Those with chronic illnesses

spend countless hours at doctor's offices, on the phone with insurance companies, looking for answers online, filling prescriptions, and a variety of other essential tasks. While this is not a complete picture of what the framework of crip time can help us to understand about our own and others' experiences, these examples do illustrate "a reorientation to time" (Kafer 27).

My project embodies this reorientation that many of us are feeling during the coronavirus pandemic. Suddenly, able-bodied people are having an experience that disabled people have been keenly aware of. Of course, the clock denotes time itself, but I have modified it to help materialize my own (and I suspect others') new understanding and experience of time. Using a newspaper, I cut out words related to the pandemic: "coronavirus," "COVID-19," "crisis," "unprecedented," "Health," "CDC," "self-quarantine," and "emergency," among many others. Importantly, I chose to cover up the numbers on the clock and I did not replace them. Everything seems to now revolve around coronavirus, no matter what hour it is. Time is becoming *more* meaningful in the outside world— living or dying can depend on how quickly one is able to get medical treatment, some say contracting the virus is "only a matter of time," each day that passes results in more deaths, and public health officials are rushing to "beat the clock" to avoid a complete doomsday scenario. However, my internal sense of time has become *less* meaningful. Completing tasks at 8am or 8pm makes no difference anymore. I can waste hours watching Netflix or playing a video game and nothing changes. I can sleep however long I want and it has no difference in my life.

In this way, my relationship to time itself has become crippled. This clock is a reflection of that.

Works Cited

Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip* [electronic Resource] / Alison Kafer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. Print.