Students,

I hope you are all healthy. Please, first things first: follow ALL of the directions of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, whose website is  <https://www.cdc.gov/>

At that website, you will find all of the accurate, specific, and necessary steps you will need to take during this worldwide crisis. To emphasize one practice you need to make a ritual: WASH YOUR HANDS. Wash your hands for 20 seconds every single time you do, thoroughly, and frequently. And then, do not touch your face. Practice social distancing. Follow general healthy habits for eating, drinking, and exercise. Implementing ALL of those measures will help boost your immune system, and PREVENT you from both contracting the coronavirus, and spreading it. Remember: prevention is far, far superior to a cure. There is as yet no vaccine for the coronavirus; that will take time to develop. If you are or get sick, with normal cold or flu symptoms or what have you, IMMEDIATELY get yourself to a medical care facility. The CDC is working on making test kits available, and the medical professionals will be able to treat and care for you. I cannot emphasize strongly enough, the need for you all to take care of yourselves, and to prevent yourselves from contracting this very serious virus. Even if you do not have health insurance coverage, GO SEEK CARE if you are sick. Hopefully--we can only hope--during this crisis our political leaders and state, local, and federal governments will be cooperating to provide the social services necessary for us to function effectively and safely in this emergency. Measures to this effect are in the works. Follow the news from Congress, the Ohio statehouse, and your respective local governments, for updates on what programs and services will be available to us and when.

* As you know, CSU is transitioning to online instruction during this crisis. I am working on redesigning our course for us. I need to know from each and every one of you who do NOT have either 1) access to the internet; or 2) a device to use to connect to and use the internet: phone, computer (desktop or laptop), or tablet. I need for you to have a screen that you can use for audio and video communication. PLEASE if you do NOT have access to EITHER or BOTH of those technologies, EMAIL ME IMMEDIATELY. This is very important. I need for you ALL to be able to connect with me, and each other, with Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, an application in our Blackboard platform.

To find Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, first go to our course in Blackboard. Then look at the "Course Management" menu on the left side of your screen. Under "Course Management," look under "Control Panel" for "Course Tools." Click on "Course Tools." One of the applications under Course Tools is "Blackboard Collaborate Ultra." This is the application we will be using to communicate with one another. It is my intent to basically conduct the course from this application. It has both audio and video features, which is why I need your device (laptop, desktop, phone, tablet), to have functioning audio and video capabilities--webcam and microphone on a desktop if it is older. As I said above, if you do NOT have access to one of these devices, OR access to the Internet, PLEASE EMAIL ME IMMEDIATELY, and I will work with the university to make sure you can access the needed technology. I am undergoing training in Blackboard Collaborate next week. Once I have more specific directions on how to use the application, I will contact you, through Blackboard announcements. MAKE SURE YOU REGULARLY CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR COMMUNICATION FROM ME. While you are waiting to hear from me with specific directions on how to use the technology, please, if you would, familiarize yourselves with it. You can test the audio and video functions, for example, recording yourselves. Once I learn how exactly the application functions with many users, I will be able to explain it to you. But, if you would, please go into the application, and take a look around.

* None of us know when or if the university will transition back to in-person teaching for the rest of the semester. Therefore, we will proceed under the assumption that the rest of the semester we will be conducting the course online, through Blackboard Collaborate. You will still be writing your second term papers, which will be due on the due date on the syllabus, and uploading them on turnitin, as you did with your first papers. I will be lecturing and leading discussions through the Collaborate application, as closely approximating the climate of our in-person classroom experience as I can, with discussions with me and among yourselves being central to the learning process. I need, therefore, for ALL of you to be able to receive and transmit audio and video content, live.
* As soon as I have all of the midterm grades calculated, I will be submitting them to the university through CampusNet next week. Those grades will be based primarily on the grades you received on your large papers--which I will snail mail to you; on your shorter writing assignments from earlier in the semester; and on your performance and attendance in class.
* We resume instruction Monday March 23. In the interim, like I said, please familiarize yourselves, to the fullest extent that you can, with Blackboard Collaborate. I will contact you as soon as I have more concrete information to share with you on how, specifically, we will proceed.
* Finally: take good care of yourselves. This last missive is the most important of all of the above.