



"One Day in May"

(May 15, 2021)

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Class Year:

Connection to the College (student? faculty? alum? friend of the College?): Faculty/staff

Describe your day on May 15, 2021. Tell us whatever you'd like at whatever length you'd like. We think future students will especially appreciate hearing about concrete details -- What can you see and hear from where you are right now? What did you do for fun today? Did you cook or eat anything special? Did you work or do chores? Who did you spend time with? What did you learn?

It's a symbol of the pandemic that I am a week late in submitting this. After a brief larky period at the beginning (we got May-term off last year! time to read and lounge around), I have found myself, like a lot of people, falling into a state of "languishing"--to use a term from an article in the New York Times in March, 2021--not quite depression, but a lack of energy, will-power, drive. On May 15, 2021, I spent a lot of time berating myself for not grading my students' tests. But on the plus side, we went to the Farmers' Market in Madison. It's always a pleasure to get fresh eggs, ground beef, kale, and strawberries from the market. Also, there have been a lots of home-baked goods: English muffins, granola, molasses cookies. Also crafts: jewelry, greeting cards, bags, cutting boards. Then, we strolled down to the Red Roaster for coffee and on to the dog park on the river. Madison can be a beautiful town.

On the other hand, I have been seeing another side of Madison lately. For Black History month, Constance Pope led a book club and we read "All We Had Was Each Other," an oral history of the Black community in Madison in the 20th century. The Farmers' Market at the Broadway Fountain is right at the edge of what was the segregated Black neighborhood, and I walk around there sometimes, including on May 15. Broadway dips downhill at 3rd Street, and it's almost as if the white people of Madison didn't even want to see the Black community. Moreover, the city refused to run sewer lines down to that area. Restaurants on Main Street were segregated, as were the schools, the "public" pool, almost everything except for the library. Occasionally, a burning cross could be seen on the hillside behind the community. That legacy of racism has left its mark on Madison, which is now a very white community. Black people do live here, but they don't spend a lot of time on Main Street. Anyway, that is an aspect of Jefferson County, IN, that I've had more time to learn and think about during this strange pandemic year.

What do you think you'll remember most about surviving the pandemic? Tell us what whatever you'd like at whatever length you'd like. We think future students will especially appreciate memories that help them picture your life and relationships -- Have you taken up any new leisure activities in the last year, or have you changed how you eat, or cook? If you're on campus, what was it like in classrooms or dining spaces or locker rooms or offices? Have you been able to stay in touch with family or friends (including classmates and other Hanoverians)? How? What have you missed the most in the past year?

Living through the pandemic has been harder than it seems it should be, considering that no one in my immediate family has been sick and no one close to me has died. And we're not really through it, though life has been getting more normal since my family has all been vaccinated and the number of cases in

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the U.S. has been dropping since mid-April. But then you hear about the horrible time India has been having these past few weeks, and you stay anxious.

Teaching with a mask on and trying to read the half faces of my students has been exhausting, but teaching on Teams or Zoom is even harder, I think. Students, even very good ones, have been struggling. Especially at the end of winter term I felt like I was dragging myself and my students over the finish line.

On top of that, the political situation in the U.S. has been tense and exhausting. Former President Trump mishandled the pandemic response, and that is even the least of the damage he has done. Systemic racism and intolerance for all kinds of diversity seem entrenched in the U.S.. And then there is a catastrophic environmental crisis looming with climate change.

It's been a tough year!

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