



**STUDENT  
ENGAGEMENT  
IN THE POST  
COVID ERA:  
Series XII**





**School Name: Penn State University**

**Year: Senior**

**Major: Criminology and Sociology**

**GPA: 3.8**

**Q: Now that everything's online, what does your typical school day look like?**

So I actually don't have any classes that meet at a specific time because of the way my school has set it up. It's asynchronous learning, so pretty much I have things to do throughout the week. I kind of wake up early at around 7:30 maybe 7 and then eat breakfast. I go to my computer and I have five classes so I go pretty much in the order my computer has it listed. I kind of just check each one and do a little bit of work for each one, plus if I have a big assignment I'll move it around. I'm pretty much down at my computer from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Q: That sounds like a lot longer than a normal school day.**

Oh, it's so much longer than a normal school day.

**Q: Would you say that's because your teachers are now giving you more homework?**

110 % that's true. My teachers give so much more homework because they assume you no longer account for travel time between classes. Like I go to a really big school, it's huge, so they assume we don't have to commute or come from our dorm and you can spend all that extra time at the computer. I also had a teacher point-blank tell me that 'okay well because we think you can cheat, we're just going to make things a little harder and give you more homework so that you can't cheat'. They do give me more written assignments rather than like online quizzes.

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**Q: How is it like now for you having to do everything in one place as opposed to being on campus?**

I find it harder to stay focused because I have so much difficult course work. I like to take breaks so when I'm home, I don't know what breaks to do. When I'm at school, I would go to the library and there's a Starbucks I would walk to and grab a coffee and come back, or walk around campus to see a friend or so. But here I find it harder to find the motivation to work on everything at once because it's just the same setting all day long and then we don't get a break. The teachers act like we get breaks but we don't really, we don't have time for a break.

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**Q: Would you say that you find this experience a little more draining then?**

Yes, I find it to be not at all what a college usually is. If I knew I'd be going through this, well no one knew that they were going into this, of course, I get that, but if I knew this was involved if I was a freshman, I would not be doing this. This is not coursework, this is just like labor, just for a degree. I can't work. Usually, I have a part-time job but I can't do that with taking online classes. And the teachers have assigned practically a class and a half worth of assignments. Like they doubled everything.

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**Q: That definitely sounds really stressful as a student.**

It is definitely especially since I'm an upperclassman, so I'm in these small tight-knit classes that are very specific. I'm not blaming the teachers, but the university hasn't really prepared them, because they had last spring and the summer to prepare for us and all they're doing now is acting like they're tenured. So they don't really care how much work they give because they can't get in trouble. They're saying that they want to be tough on us to make sure that we're learning, but if I know one thing, assigning an obscene amount of work is not the right way to do that.

**Q: Have you experienced any technical issues on your teachers' end?**

Yes, I have. I have a teacher who only wants phone calls, like we only meet via phone calls because he doesn't know how to use Zoom. So he assigns everything via email because he doesn't know how to use our classroom-based software. We use Canvas, he doesn't know how to use that.

**Q: How does that go, doing everything via phone call?**

It doesn't go at all. There are people who don't know how to call in, and there's people whose phones have died. I live in an area where there's very little cell phone service so I literally have to walk out to my backyard and stand out there to find service. Yeah like it sucks. If he says 'open your laptop' I have to say I can't because I'm in the middle of a field.

**Q: Right now are any of your lectures pre-recorded?**

No, I have teachers who say if you want to attend you can, but then they record it eventually. They'll put it up eventually, but the incentive is if you watch live, then you can start the assignment immediately. But if you don't, you have to wait a few hours for it to upload. So it's kind of like yes and no if it's live or not.

**Q: How have your lectures been as far as them being engaging and interesting?**

They're trying to be engaging like I have a sign language class so that's hard because we're all trying to sign on camera, and then there's people whose cameras are off so the teachers can't engage with that. But she tries to use breakout rooms but she doesn't know how to go into them to watch each of the groups, so we're just kind of talking to ourselves. So I guess she's trying to be engaging, but it's not really working. The other teachers are not really using any sort of engaging materials, they're just kind of talking to us.

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**Q: If you need help, how do you talk to your teachers or approach them if you can?**

It's kind of split down the middle. A couple of my professors have Zoom office hours like once a week so you can just hop in there. But I get nervous about that because what if I'm just sitting there listening to another person's conversation you know whereas in person if I was to go into someone else's office, I knock and if someone's in there, I walk away and come back. There's also the kind of teachers who are just like 'email me and we can schedule something on our own time' so I like that more, but I haven't taken advantage of it yet but I feel like I will eventually when it becomes more relevant as the semester goes on.

**Q: Have your teachers implemented anything at all in order to help you out?**

The only thing that I've seen pretty much is that they're uploading PDFs of scanned textbooks because they know we can't access the textbooks because they're at the store and we don't have the store. So that is the only real resource that we've had.

**Q: Has your university provided you with anything?**

It's kind of like 'contact us and we'll figure it out' so to me it kind of sounds like an inconvenience to them. Like where is my money going? Usually, we have activity fees and we have these technology fees that are part of our tuition, that wasn't reimbursed and they're still not helping us with that.

**Q: Any other concerns?**

I just really hope that if this continues, the teachers are properly trained with how to use the technology. I feel bad for them in a way, but at the same time, I don't because they had time to prepare and they can't expect us to come to the classroom fully ready to learn when they're not fully ready to teach. It's a two-way street and I don't think this school is doing anything to help their staff teach the students. They're very very money-hungry right now and it's so upsetting to see that my education comes second to money.

