

Working with the COVIDCalls Archive for Teaching

By Cecília Tomori (Johns Hopkins University)

The COVIDCalls Digital Archive offers a unique opportunity to explore the impacts and experiences of the COVID pandemic for teaching across the disciplines. This is an assignment for upper-level high school students and/or college-level students.

Access the COVIDCalls Digital Archive here: <https://covid-calls.com/>

Sample teaching assignment:

Compare narratives about the pandemic from two episodes in the COVIDCalls Digital Archive a year apart on the same date or week.

1. Set the stage:

Divide students into groups of 2-3. Ask group to look up data about the pandemic for those two dates from the WHO, Our World In Data or the CDC. At least one group should focus on the global situation overall, one on the US, and others on selected countries from the different continents. Groups will report out on and discuss the following questions:

- What was the state of the pandemic at these two dates?
- Which countries were most affected?
- Were vaccines available? What percentage of the population was vaccinated in your setting?
- How many deaths were recorded the world cumulatively at the time? What about on a 14 day moving average for daily deaths? In your specific setting?
- How have these data changed across the two time points?
- Did you notice any inequities within your setting? Discuss as large group: How about across settings?

2. Compare the introductory vignettes provided by Dr. Knowles about people affected by COVID-19. (discussion in small or large groups)

- What are your reflections on hearing these two vignettes?
- What are some similarities and differences between these two experiences?
- What does teach us about experiences of the pandemic?

3. Discuss how the guests in each of the two episodes talked about COVID.

- What background/expertise do the guests bring to these episodes?
- What were their main concerns? Identify 2-3 main themes in the discussion.
- What were their hopes or wishes for the future?
- How have these narratives shifted in the discussion recorded one year later?
- Are there any areas of shared insight? Or key differences in perception of the pandemic?

4. **Integration.**

- What are some key themes you learned from the two episodes you have listened to?
- How does a particular setting or time influence perceptions of the pandemic?
- What about the background of the guests?
- How does this relate to your own perception and/or experience of the pandemic (please feel free to share your experience only as you are comfortable).
- Write a short essay on the questions and the discussion resulting from these questions. Produce a short unessay assignment that incorporates visual or audio elements.

Similar comparative exercises can also be carried out focused on a specific group of people, eg children in the pandemic, or on a specific setting that has multiple episodes addressing it.

Additional comparative discussions and assignments.

Explore a particular theme – eg racism, vaccine inequity – across the episodes.

Discuss how disasters intersect with one another by using episodes on COVID and war, for instance.

About the Instructor

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Cecília Tomori is an anthropologist and public health scholar whose work investigates the structural and sociocultural drivers that shape health, illness, and health inequities. Dr. Tomori is an internationally recognized expert on breastfeeding, infant sleep, and maternal child health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she has supported numerous organizations focused on maternal child health and advocated for integrated and equitable pandemic policies. Recently, she has also been pursuing how science and health policy are influenced by financial and political interests. Dr. Tomori has collaborated with colleagues at Johns Hopkins and beyond on breastfeeding, infant sleep, infectious disease prevention, drug use and health policy, among other topics. She has authored three books on breastfeeding and reproduction and numerous publications on a range of public health issues.