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## **Engaged scholarship needed to understand the socio-cultural, political and economic implications of COVID-19**

The University of Cape Town (UCT)'s [Institute for the Humanities in Africa](#) (HUMA), along with international collaborators worldwide, has launched [Corona Times](#), a space where engaged scholars from across the world offer detailed, rigorously researched, ethical expert commentary that explores ways to grasp the various facets of the current moment.

Scholars also propose ways forward and evaluate social, economic and public health interventions on multiple temporal scales, from the short-term to the long view.

Such commentary thus far includes, [Academic freedom in times of COVID-19](#), [Social distancing and "flatten the curve": Africa can do it](#) and [Trust in science and Sweden's different approach to COVID-19](#).

As the death toll increases and the negative economic effects deepen, there is no certain timeline about when a vaccine might be ready, and it is not known when current measures of containment will be done away with, the editorial team shares.

"One thing is clear: academic debate and pluralism can help us grapple with the many uncertainties provoked by the virus. The epidemiological data is emerging, but still limited. Even more obscure are the socio-cultural, political and economic implications of the pandemic. For example, what does contagion mean for people and their everyday lives; who or what do people hold responsible, if anybody or anything, for the onset of the pandemic; and how are people mourning their dead when in many cases they can't perform their rituals of mourning?

"Thinking further: what happens to ideas – such as government, state, citizenship, rights, and life itself – that have been used to theorise collective action and political community?"

According to the editorial team, to rediscover our interconnectedness and warmth in these times of existential crisis we need to rethink and remould ideas of freedom, responsibility and interdependence, by appreciating that being with and for others, and knowing how and when to restrain ourselves are also fundamental freedoms that nurture individuals and societies.

[Corona Times](#) is a blog and public engagement project launched by UCT's [HUMA](#). The editorial team and advisory board of this international collaborative effort can be found [here](#).

***ENDS***

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

**Aamirah Sunday**

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer  
Communication and Marketing Department  
University of Cape Town  
Rondebosch  
Tel: (021) 650 5427  
Cell: (076) 947 6071

Email: [aamirah.sunday@uct.ac.za](mailto:aamirah.sunday@uct.ac.za)

Website: [www.uct.ac.za](http://www.uct.ac.za)