**Marissa Interview**

**Date: January 14th, 2021**

**Interviewer**: Yeah. So, the first question I have for you. What is your programme of study? Exactly?

**Marissa**: So, Sociology Major, and then anthropology and philosophy minor.

**Interviewer**: Okay.

**Interviewer**: Okay, and you're in fourth year?

**Marissa**: Yeah.

**Interviewer**: Cool. And, um, so you're a domestic student?

**Marissa**: Mm hmm.

**Interviewer**: Okay. And so right now, what are some of like the format's of your current like classes?

**Marissa**: So because I'm shopping around for this semester, I'm not quite sure yet. But last semester, they were all synchronous. All seen, and there was a mix between Blackboard Collaborate and zoom. But during the summer, I had two out of the four courses were asynchronous, and all the lectures were pre recorded. They're the best.

**Interviewer**: Next question, so if it weren't for COVID, what form of classes would you rather have? Would you rather have it still synchronous online or in person or both?

**Marissa**: So when the fall semester first started, like, if a class was really small, they were still hosting classes on the St. George campus. So I took Jewish philosophy and for the first month of the semester, they were in person, but some of us were online. And I like that option. Like should be available if we were still taking courses in person that some people should be able to join online. Yeah. Because everyone's situation is different. Like some people might move away from school and be on campus and just like take a five minute walk in their in class, and then other people might be like, really far from school. Like, if it was me personally, like, I would actually end up this is like my own, like, unique take on it, but kind of rather stay online just because I'm almost done my degree, it's easier to just sign in and just do it all like through my laptop.

**Interviewer**: so you said that you're only taking like one course right now, but last semester, how many do you take Last semester

**Marissa**: I took four. And then like, so throughout the year, I took 12. Okay.

**Interviewer**: And so if classes were in person, would you have taken to that amount? Or would you have taken more or less?

**Marissa**: I probably would have taken less if it was in person because I wouldn't have those a lot of the courses that I took both halves of the summer portion and then the fall semester. Most of them were St. George courses. And then even if they had been UTM courses to, like, take on that amount and commuting, that would be that would take more time compared to just doing it online. Okay.

**Interviewer**: So you kind of answered this, but since the removed since the move to remote learning has your GPA been affected at all?

**Marissa**: Yeah, it's kind of weird. Like I don't know if it's because I'm because I'm also like, taking time off of work that has helped so much but like, I was even like, I was still volunteering at a school though. So like, I'm trying to like addicts. my resume for grad school because I want to get go to OISE for their master's in teaching programme. So I've been volunteering at a school, it's obviously close now. But like, throughout the fall semester, I was there like three or four days a week. So I was so busy. So I think that the switch online overall has actually helped my GPA a lot. Because I'm not commuting anymore. And I'm also I feel like I'm more present when I'm attending online lectures compared to when I was in person.

**Interviewer**: So the next part of the question I asked you, has your focus been affected? I know you kind of mentioned that earlier, too.

**Marissa**: I think that one struggle that I've had with the switch to online is, during the lectures and whatnot, I've gotten I'm actually very present because I'm like, I feel like when I was visiting the campus, and I'd work after like just different stuff, I was always go, go go. And then now I'm more present. Yeah. But what I will say though, is my focus in terms of essays and assignments, it's very easy to kind of fall off track when you're home so much, is it's just the days like all kind of blend together. And like I don't know, I just, I would feel more focused automatically by being at Campus, like just by going to the library and being there like knowing, okay, we're gonna get work done. Now I have to like, stay here until I get my stuff done. Yeah, I don't really like, get that same feeling. When I'm at home, I'll have to like literally lock myself into like a small room in my house and be like, I'm not leaving until I'm like, done this paper.

**Marissa**: Yeah, it's taken a lot more effort to be to retaining that focus and stuff. So yeah.

**Interviewer**: I feel like we're all kind of in that boat.

**Interviewer**: All right. Um, next question, if you feel comfortable sharing, has this transition to remote learning had any effect on your mental health?

**Marissa**: And it's, like, there's pros and cons, I think, because like, I've met people in ways like online now that I might not have in person. But I also think that when you're in person, like the bond that you have with the people that you meet is just like, you're all kind of struggling, so you buy more because of it. And it's more visceral when it's in person, even though like, in my bond, like, with their classmates over a group chat, like, but it's not the same as in person. And yeah, I think like, just the isolation overall, is making like a lot of people's mental health worse, like, for good reason, because it's tough to literally earn your degree in your bedroom. Like it's just such a weird time.

**Interviewer**: Oh, yeah. Very weird.

**Marissa**: Strange. I remember when this all felt like a dream, too. Like, it just didn't feel like it's gonna last and now we're almost a year later.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, exactly. I'm just like, what just what has happened this last year? Like, it just feels weird. Next question. So since this pandemic started to move online, have you felt your motivation to do well academically has changed at all?

**Marissa**: I think it's kind of improved, but that's because I'm in fourth year. So like, I'm like, no matter what's going on. I'm just like, focused on doing well, no matter what, because I know it counts more now than at any other time. Yeah. And I actually like, I think that I've been better about going to office hours or asking for help. clarification. Like, it's all virtual compared to in person. It's just like less daunting. Like, I found that when I was in like a big like lecture hall and whatnot, like asking questions was like, kinda like, but yeah, it's like online. It's not as bad. Yeah,

**Interviewer**: All right. Um, so I'm going to ask you some questions regarding your, like, personal background. So first is how would you describe your ethnic background?

**Marissa**: basically, like, my mom is German and my dad's Italian.

**Interviewer**: And what's your gender identity?

**Marissa**: Female

**Interviewer**: And how would you classify your socio economic background?

**Marissa**: I'd say average. I saved a lot in general, like, not just before the pandemic, but throughout the years, because like being in the service industry depends on your environment, but like, I've just decided to save my money, like, as I've been assert over the last six years, like I've been doing, okay. Okay.

**Interviewer**: And this year, did you receive any type of like government financial assistance?

**Marissa**: just CERB.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Yeah. And what is your current living situation? So like, who do you live with?

**Marissa**: I live with my family.

**Interviewer:** And, like, where you live? Do you have access to a quiet learning space, so that includes like, your own room, or like a shared room where you do your work and stuff?

**Marissa**: Someone I know, this doesn't sound like a big deal. But my brother is 13. And he online games with his friends. And literally to the point where like, he'll be screaming and like, this was a huge problem over the summer, when I'd be in. What was it I did like a fourth year, like masculinities course, like I said, of course, and like, there was 10 of us in the class, we were always like, talking for the straight two hours every single week. Yeah. And I'd be in the middle of like participating and you just hear screaming, and then I'd lose my train of thought, oh, I've gotten more of a handle on things because my parents don't really get involved. So like, they're, they're 50 they're tired. So like, I have to actually, like, take control. But that's been that's been tough for me, though. Because it's like, I know, doesn't sound like it's something that like, you have to experience to fully get it like, it's nonstop. It especially with this was a huge thing. With tests or exams. There was one of my courses in summer where we had timed midterms and as high a midterm at time final. And people even if they were in Asia, and it was two in the morning, they'd have to sign on and do that, like exam for those two hours. So I'd be doing it and then like screaming just in the room. And I'm like, if this was in person, I would not have to deal with any of this like it just like Yeah. Yeah, it's better now because he's an online school now. So it kind of works out. Yeah.

**Interviewer**: Um, so do you have access to adequate technological resources to help you with school so that includes like, Wi Fi computer with webcams?

**Marissa**: Yeah. Sometimes my Wi Fi is like timing out while I'm in a lecture, but otherwise, I feel like everyone's kind of dealt with at different points.

**Interviewer**: All right. So as a member of your household, what are things that like you're required to do? So, this includes like, household duties, errands, babysitting, giving rides stuff like that?

**Marissa**: It's actually a lot for me personally, because, like my brother's 13 my sister's 15 So ever since then, I'm like 25. So ever since I was 10. I was kind of like the third parent. So in terms of groceries in terms of rides in terms of helping them with their homework now that they've been online, like on and off. Even just like, there's so many little things that add up when you're like a pseudo parent. So I can't really like break it down in terms of an amount of time that takes like, per week, but it varies. But it's something that I've always kind of done. So, like, it just has always been part of the equation like, so to speak. I have like a large age gap with my sister as well. She's, she's 10 years younger than me. So. Yeah. Yeah. So, um, a lot of that was like, yeah, babysitting her and stuff and all that.

**Interviewer**: All right. Um, next is so have you are like someone close to you, like in your immediate family been diagnosed with COVID-19?

**Marissa**: No.

**Interviewer**: Really good to you.

**Marissa**: I mean, there's been some COVID scares, but nothing. So my sister and I both thought that we had actually last March, we both got violent case of strep, twice. Oh, like, within like, a couple weeks. And like, it was bad. I haven't had strep since I was six. I don't think she's ever had it. And my fever was like 40. And I could hardly stand and I called my doctor's office to make an appointment. And the nurse was just like, no, we're asking people to stay home if they have those symptoms, because the virus will get a nurse to call you in a couple of days. And I was like, I'm literally explaining that I can't stand right now. Like, I need to see a doctor like a nurse can call me in two days. Or I can just go to a different walk in right now and see a doctor. And then she's like, well, it's up to us. And then I just like, went to a different walk and close to home. And they noticed right away. So Wow. Yeah.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, I've heard I've heard about people's experiences with strep. I'm like, Oh, my God, that's terrifying. Yeah. Um, so next question. So are there any type of like circumstances and this is like family, financial, personal, that have had any type of like, effect at all. And this effect is, like positive or negative on your overall experience with learning online.

**Marissa**: I don't really think there's anything specific I can pinpoint other than the fact that like, the situations are very stressful for everyone. So that means that everyone's more reactive, there's more fights, there's more this and that, like, just because everyone's on edge. So there was a point in October I wore my mom got, like, really, like crazy. And then like, I had to get some extensions and some assignments because I was like, I can't, I can't focus on it. And so thankfully, like, this is kind of what I meant in terms of like, probably more understanding throughout this time. Because I feel like if I said that a year ago, like I'm going through like severe, like family issues, because of the pandemic like that were tight. Like if I said something like, non COVID equivalent a year ago, I feel like it probably more standoffish, but they're very part of.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Thanks for sharing. So the next is like some pre pandemic question. So. So you did mention before that you drove to campus before the shutdown? And how long did it take you?

**Marissa**: Like 45 minutes?

**Interviewer**: Okay.

**Interviewer:** Where do you live my life? You don't mind me asking?

**Marissa**: Georgetown? Oh, yeah, I lived in Brampton before and then my dad switched jobs. So Georgetown, and within a year, I tried living with my friend instead, so that I wouldn't be driving so far for both school and work because I work in Mississauga as well. And it's tough living with their friends, especially when they have two kids and I already have two siblings. So yeah, it was just a bit chaotic. So I moved back home. But yeah, it's a long drive. And it's also um I don't know how to explain it like I would rather live in a tobacco and drive to UTM. And like, let's say I live on the opposite side of the tobacco and it took me like 40 minutes to get to UTM. That's like city to city. So like, it's not a massive switch with us driving from the country to the city every day. Like, it's something about it is more exhausting. Like when I was in Brampton, driving to Mississauga, even though it was like 35 minutes like, it didn't feel as draining.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, yeah, I can see what you mean. Because it's just like, you see, like trees, just like, like, a two lane road. And then you go like that. I get what you mean. Yeah.

**Interviewer**: All right. Um, how many hours a week did you spend on campus?

**Marissa**: approximately 25 that I get? I don't know. Like, I would squish all my courses together. So I wouldn't have to drive like as much. Yeah. Okay.

Interviewer: Next. So how did or did you use it? utilise any type of campus resources for your academics? And this includes things like the academic centre library, help

Marissa: study spaces, Yeah. Yeah. The writing Centre for sure, too.

Unknown Speaker 22:03

All right. And you did mention this. So you were employed by the before the pandemic? How many hours did you work?

Marissa: Like 30- 35? Yeah, it depends on the week, it would depend on like, the time of the year like around December, we usually get like crazy for Christmas and stuff like that. I miss work so much, much. But I worked a lot. And I think that that's part of the reason why my GPA went up throughout this pandemic to is not just like, because I wasn't commuting, but I love working. So I was like, serving a lot. And obviously, it's long hours. It's late nights. And yeah, so I was working like a good amount.

Interviewer: Um, so the last few questions I have are regarding, like, your opinion on like UTM. So before the pandemic, and like currently, did you use any of the available resources from UTM for help? So this includes financial resources, academic support, the Career Centre I see or anything like that? Yeah. All right, Which ones did you use?

**Marissa**: Career Centre?

**Interviewer**: And did you find it helpful for you at all?

**Marissa:** Yeah.

**Interviewer**: So you did also mention to this question also kind of. So do you think that your professors are doing enough to be comedy for you and other students? If you feel comfortable, you can explain them like an instance where they have or have not.

Marissa: Yeah, overall, they've been amazing. I will save for this, like anthropology of food course that I did. That is the one where you had like the time like midterm in the final. A lot, I feel like props that teach the easier courses are insecure of looking like they teach an easy course. So they try to make it like not all of them do this, but sometimes they add all this extra weight into it. But like during a pandemic, that's not what everyone needs. So this problem with literally like, our lectures, were supposed to be two hours, and I'd keep go over like three hours. All the material would be like crazy. And we test it on everything. And our Oh, my God, like our midterm was. So each short answer had to be around five sentences. And there was like, 20 of them. And then we had an essay question, which had to be I think, like, 1000 words, but if you really think about that, like, for all the material that we had to cover, and then we also it was a closed book exam, even though it's online, so. So like, and it's all timed within like two hours. Like, it's just it's to the point where it's like, you know what, like, people still want to get their degree, they still want to do something with the time off that they have, you don't have to make it this stressful, like there's a certain limit, at a certain point. A sign aside from him know, like, I think profs in general, have been very understanding. I had one prof who gave us a five day extension coupon. She literally was like, at the beginning of the semester, she's like, if you go to Page Six, and the syllabus, like it shows you that you don't have to ask me for an extension at some point in the semester, you can literally just use this like five day voucher and just email me like a day in advance before it's due. And was that so like? Overall, they've all been pretty great. Wow, that's really

**Interviewer**: Okay. I'm glad you had that a good experience. So do you think, overall UTM is doing enough to accommodate its students right now?

**Marissa**: Yeah, the only thing I would say is like, it falls a lot on the profs. So I think UTM as a school needs to be very clear about. Like, for example, I think that exam timeframe for the fall semester was like a complete mess. Like it didn't I don't know about you. But like, it didn't make any sense for me, because we had like our last day of classes. And then immediately after we'd have a bunch of stuff do with us, the St. George campus was way more organised. So like, because I was taking like, courses at both campuses, I was able to see the difference. And with St. George, they gave people to like the 18. Because you actually need those few days to get ready for exams instead of just going straight from classes to exams. So I think that that's the one thing that UTM in general needs to do. Yeah, but But otherwise, it rests on the props. Like, I think they've done pretty well so far, for the most part.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah, I would agree with that. All right. So those are all the questions that I have for you.

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