

## Remote Teaching-- and Learning: My Experience

By Stanley Chodorow  
*Professor Emeritus of History*

Nothing like learning something new in your fifty-second year of teaching. I gave two courses this spring—Humanities 2 in the Revelle College program and an Osher course. I did Humanities by recording the lectures and holding the TA meetings and office hours by Zoom. I did the Osher course by Zoom. There were about 125 students in Humanities and 115-125 in the Osher course.

The two experiences were quite different, as were the class members, which affects my conclusions about the effectiveness of e-teaching. The first-year students in Humanities are smart and tech-savvy; the elders in the Osher course are smart, well-educated, and have 70-90 years of life experience. I'll begin with the Humanities course.

Recording lectures takes a lot of time and changes the nature of the lectures. As I began lecturing to a computer, I realized within a couple of days that students in class are the soil in which lectures grow. For classroom teaching, you prepare for a lecture by going over and adding to your notes, re-reading texts, and thinking about where to start. Then, you go talk to the students.

Giving the lecture to the computer makes you aware of how much



Stanley Chodorow

your performance depends on the response you get from the students. Some of the response comes as questions, but most of it is from the signals that people give when someone is talking to them. We are good at picking up those signals, and teachers, typically, are responsive to them. You adjust your pace, repeat or rephrase a point, add or delete material on the basis of that feedback. Students in class do not alter the content of your presentation, but they affect the way you express it and your pace. A lecture is not a set piece; it is an act of interpersonal communication.

Recording a lecture is a completely different kind of communication. The lectures deliver information and insights to unknown, unseen persons. Interactions with students are separate from the lectures, experienced in discrete sessions dedicated to discussion. The audience could be reading the lecture as well as hearing it, and, as you record, you often think that

they would be better off reading than hearing it.

That is because recorded lectures are much denser than classroom ones. The process starts in the same way as it does for classroom performances. You prepare and then deliver. I found that getting started is harder for a recording session than it is for a classroom lecture. Although I almost always think about where I will start when I go to class, the initial interaction with students before I get going completes that step of preparation. The computer does not interact, so you have to find a way to warm up. A couple, or more,

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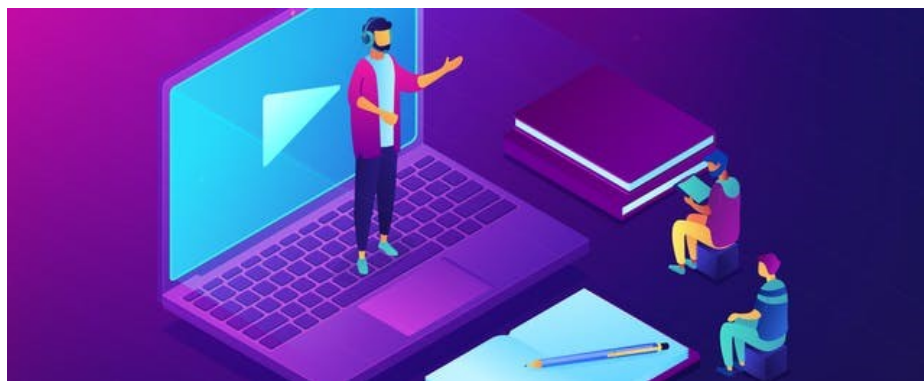
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false starts were common.

Then, you dictate to the computer. I often envied professional actors who might be able to perform without an audience—although the experience of **Stephen Colbert** and others who have been broadcasting from home without an audience indicates that even professionals struggle in front of no one. I found that I usually ran off 10-12 minutes of dictation before I ran off the road into a



marsh. Sometimes, I took a couple of minutes to pull myself together and started again, but usually I went back to edit what I had dictated as a way to set my course forward.

Editing is a slow, dispiriting process. Listening to one's bumbles, mumbles (mispronunciations, indistinct pronunciations etc.), and silent or audible hunts for the right word or phrase makes one wonder about one's knowledge and intelligence. We are better talking to people than to machines. Face-to-face talk, even when you are doing nearly all the talking, is easier, smoother, and more effective than the first go at dictation to an inanimate object. In addition, listening to one's voice, especially when talking about complex material, reveals that we were not admitted to graduate school because we had great, radio-announcer voices. And it is hard to be dramatic without a live audience.

So, the process of recording was very slow and a bit depressing. It also produced very tight presentations. The original dictations were never good enough. In class, you can fix what does not go well; listening to a recording of such vagaries is intolerable. So, you edit the production to say what you want to say and then go on to next point. I would now bet that 10-15 minutes of an 80-minute classroom lecture—the T/Th variety that I have always used in Humanities—is fluff or repetition. So, the recorded versions have more

information and explanation in them than normal. In addition, in class you swim along making your main points and ignoring this and that. When you are sitting in front of your computer, you can look things up, reread passages, do some research. The product is rich, dense, and better, if intensity is better, than a classroom lecture. And it takes a lot of work to do it.

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Once they had decided to record lectures, the Humanities staff strongly recommended that we break the 80-

minute lectures into four 20-minute segments. It usually took me a full day, 12-14 hours, to record one of those segments. When I was able to do one and half in a day, I felt very good about myself. I recognize that I should not blame the technology or the format for my neurotic need to do it right, but everyone I talked to about the recording process reported that it was very hard work.

In retrospect, I appreciate the effort, because I saw things in the great works I was teaching—*The Aeneid*, **Augustine's Confessions**, *Njal's Saga*, and *The Divine Comedy*—that I had never seen before. The experience enriched me. What the students got from listening to me delve into such topics as the significance of Augustine's reaction to his mother's death, I don't know. And that ignorance is a key to a judgment of e-teaching. I had much less interaction with students than normal, and, while I know that I provided more information and analysis than I ever had in the Humanities course, I do not believe I was teaching. The core of our work is to teach students how to judge, use, and make knowledge, and that work takes interaction, both concentrated and fleeting. We have all had former students tell us that something we said or did in a course gave them a perspective or made a light go on. Much of the time, the something was a small point or an offhand remark that we made as we covered some material. The central aims and activities of our courses do a lot of educational work, but far from all of it. This term, I gave my Humanities students a great deal of information, but I do not feel as if I taught them what they really have to know, much of which is conveyed when, looking at the students, you stop to reflect on why that apparently trivial or obscure point you just made matters. You do some of that in a recording, but you have no idea

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whether they pay attention to it and you can be sure you do it less often than you would in class.

The other course I gave this spring was a five-lecture program on the transformation of cities focused on the history of Rome, Paris, and New York. The Osher Institute was the agent of that course, which I created last year for the Culture, Arts, and Technology (CAT) program in Sixth College. I gave the course through Zoom. I lectured for an hour and then took questions for an hour. I've done several Osher courses in recent years, all with that format—talk for an hour, take questions for an hour. As in the live versions, I created PowerPoint presentations of maps and pictures and lectured from the slides. The only disadvantage of the online format was that I could not point to what was on the screen. You cannot draw on PowerPoint during a slide show. So, if you can anticipate that you want to point something out on a map or picture, you have to prepare a slide ahead of time. The inability to extemporize on the slides reduces the flexibility and spontaneity of the lectures. You

are also present in the lecture only in a small picture on the screen, because to show the class your slides you have to “share screen.” You feel as if you speaking from behind the screen, a disembodied voice. I found that the experience made me a bit uncomfortable and awkward at times, but that may be my problem.

The discussion period after the lecture was pretty efficient. 115-125 seniors—the class is composed of people in the 70s and 80s, with a few folks old even by our standards—jump at the opportunity to raise questions, and their questions are wonderful. These are educated, self-assured people whose questions rest on long experience in the world. The number of perspectives and the types of professional backgrounds assure a great variety of questions and comments. I always run out of time, not questions. Zoom worked reasonably well for the discussion period. A technical manager orchestrated the participation. Anyone wanting to participate signaled it by raising a hand, and he brought them in in order. This technology worked.

I will give my CAT course online in the fall quarter. It will have over

100 students, and no class over 50 will be permitted to meet in a classroom. I will use Zoom and will divide class time between lecture and discussion. How exactly I will do that is not yet clear. It is not possible to allow students to raise questions during a Zoom lecture, so I will set aside one or perhaps two periods during the lectures for questions. I do not expect 18-year-olds to jump in the way 80-year-olds do, so I am unsure about how that plan will work out. I know that I do not want to deliver a disembodied lecture and disappear as soon as I stop talking. Walking into and out of class is always a rich experience and contributes a great deal to the education of students. The elders do well on Zoom, because they have a self-confidence and energy for learning that first-year students rarely have, and they are already educated. For college-aged students, e-teaching is a significantly less effective way to teach than classroom lectures and seminars, if we care about teaching as opposed to delivering information.



## Remote Learning: The Student Viewpoint

**Kyoko Downey**  
2019 Cohort  
Literature Major

Stress, loneliness, anxiety. These feelings are natural but have only increased in volume because of COVID-19. Our daily vocabulary has changed, there is a universal empathy when we ask each other “how are you?”, and our lifestyles have adapted to a new normalcy. But has it adapted to an environment conducive to learning? Personally, the answer leans towards no.

Courses have felt depersonalized and disconnected, especially if they lack any synchronous offering. Being a literature major, generating meaningful discussions is increasingly difficult across barriers of space and time. What used to be an engaging dialogue is moreso posting into a digital void with little response. This personally has been the most difficult part of remote learning; the human element of education cannot be imitated through Zoom.

Perhaps the silver lining for me has been time. This is a subjective prize

but one I have chosen to maximize. I can now invest in projects, like my art/clothing business, while also investing in myself. Although many of the internships I had intended to apply for are on pause, many programs have adapted to the digital workspace. In particular, witnessing the mental toil of our situation, I have involved myself in mental health advocacy, applying to become a Wellness Peer Educator with CAPS. It feels strange to imagine

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*The Student Viewpoint cont. from pg. 3*

dressing up for a Zoom interview with no handshaking or body language to read. But as with all things in our new world, we adapt.

To my fellow scholars, I suggest you find a purpose and continue your passion. Give yourself time-specific goals in an obscure timeline, grow and reflect. But most importantly, be kind to yourself. Our current period is filled with so much uncertainty it is important to have a support system in place and that starts with ourselves. CAPS and the Zone are underrated resources for wellness education, office hours have been an invaluable means of feeling connected to the individual a screen away from you, and workshops like iLead continue this conversation.



In a time of social distancing, social solidarity is priceless.

**Vince Ly**  
2018 Cohort  
Molecular & Cellular Biology

COVID-19 has reduced my classroom experience to a collection of Zoom calls throughout the day. It's not the same because I don't have that face-to-face interaction with my peers and professors, which help me learn. Despite this, I've been slowly transitioning to the online quarter and do find it in a way more relaxing. This is probably because I'm usually crouched on my chair, wrapped in several blankets, and in my pajamas after finding the guilt to roll out of bed to "attend lecture." I am in a physics lab class this quarter, and rely on watching pre-recorded videos of my professor performing the experiments. Lab data are provided so it's very convenient.

I would say the best part of remote learning is the freedom. I find that I am able to sort of learn at my own pace because every-

thing is recorded now for "asynchronous viewing." This means that I can set my own schedule of when I want to watch lectures, take notes, and do homework. This is sort of a double-edged sword because it becomes very easy to fall behind if you don't keep up with the course work. It took a few weeks, but I think I've figured out what works best for me.

I intended to study abroad this coming summer in Osaka, Japan to conduct research but my trip was cancelled. The study abroad office also told me that I'd have to reapply next year for a spot in the same program, but that I'd be given "special consideration." We'll see how that goes...

Understand that this is a new experience for everyone and you are not alone in your struggles. If you need help, don't be afraid to reach out to friends/staff or CAPS at UCSD!



## Two Essays on the November Election

### The Choice

By **Sandy Lakoff**

Both **Joe Biden** and Donald Trump agree that the election this November could well be the most important in recent American history.

They disagree completely, of course, on why.

Trump contends that unless he is retained in office, this country will be forcibly transformed into a socialist dystopia; that in the process law and order will be replaced by anarchy, looting, and mob rioting, not just in our big cit-

ies but even in the suburbs and rural towns, thanks to the "defunding" of the police and an invasion by hordes of non-white immigrants, carrying drugs, disease, and gang violence, as a result of the "radical Democrats" belief in "open borders;" and that instead of independent greatness and prosperity we will be all but conquered and reduced to servitude by China.

It is a message designed to mobilize his "base" of 35-40% of the electorate, those who share these fears and welcome his support for gun rights, the "right to life," blocking virtually all immigration,

preserving a majority white America, and hostility to gays. They agree with economic policies allowing increased inequality for the sake of job creation and the strangulation of government by the dark money of the rich and giant corporations. They don't mind that a Trump regime would deprive poor people of government-subsidized health care and they are ready to overlook its colossal failure to respond to the pandemic. Trump's obvious aim is to get more of his fervent supporters to go to the polls, especially in the critical swing states, while he

deliberately tries to weaken the voting power of his opponents by denying aid to the post office and states for processing mailed ballots and by intimidating voters at the polls likely to support Democratic candidates.



Biden has maintained from the outset of his campaign that this election is a struggle for the soul of America. He means that it will test whether we will deal seriously, once and for all, with the racial injustices that have plagued our history; whether we will have a government that respects democratic norms like executive accountability to Congress, impartial justice, and a free press, one that respects honest civil servants when they become whistleblowers rather than demonizing them as enemies of the people and “the deep state;” whether we will “build better back” by ending tax favoritism for the rich and investing in our neglected infrastructure; whether we will get control of the pandemic by a national policy so we can reopen our schools and businesses; and whether we can deal seriously with the existential threat of climate change -- a challenge this administration shamelessly calls a hoax invented by the Chinese to weaken our economy.

Elections are about more than policies; they are also about the character and abilities of those who will carry them out. Trump’s pathological narcissism, acknowledged even by his supporters, leads him to inhabit a world of his own imagining, to lie about anything that might embarrass him, to wield the reins of government to favor allies and pun-

ish critics. His gross incompetence is undeniable, as is his affinity for white nationalists, mad conspiracy theorists, and dictators. By contrast, Biden is all but defined by his empathy. He may not always say well what he means but he does always mean well. He would appoint advisers, cabinet members, and other officials who would respect democratic norms and rebuild our relations with our allies. Above all, together with **Kamala Harris**, he would work for our common good, like the best of our leaders from **Washington to Lincoln to FDR**.

For me, the choice could not be more obvious or more imperative.

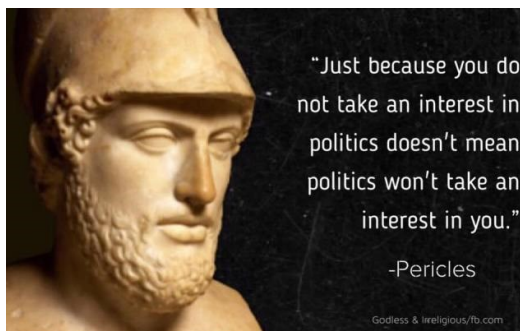


## A Call to Practice Democracy

by **Suzan Cioffi**

With a momentous election just a few short months away, I add my voice to the chorus of those who call upon all Americans to do their civic duty and vote.

In his famous funeral oration honoring those who died for democratic Athens, **Pericles** stressed the importance of active citizenship: “We do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all.” Pericles, who was annually elected *tratego*s or general more than twenty times, was also a great orator and



skilled statesman. History has so prized his thinking and activity that the period known as the pinnacle of Athenian political power and artistic achievement (446-429 BC), is called the Periclean Age. In this observation, he captures the Athenian belief that the call to practice democracy must be taken seriously by every citizen. The English word “idiot” comes from the Greek term *idiōtēs*, meaning “private citizen”—one who isn’t involved in the public life of the *polis*. Let us all avoid being idiots, and vote!

Our lives are impacted in myriad ways by the leaders at the top of the national ticket. If Americans will continue to have access to affordable health insurance, if immigrant children will not be torn away from their parents and stored and forgotten in cages at our southern border, if women will continue to have the legal right to abortion, if we as a nation will reverse on our calamitous journey toward permanently damaging our environment, if we are to overcome vitriol and bigotry, arrest our frightful trajectory toward a more dictatorial power structure with weakening press scrutiny, legislative and judicial controls --- these are all questions which will be answered by our momentous vote in November.

Let none among us think that we can “sit this one out” because we are less than enamored of the alternative. And, be clear, voting for a “write-in” candidate is tantamount to endorsing the status quo. Our very democracy is on the line this time. Not voting makes you responsible for the potential cataclysm propelled by complacency.



## “Disaster Double Whammies: SARS CoV-2 and Disaster Shelters”

By **Irving "Jake" Jacoby, MD,**  
FACP, FACEP, FAAEM, FUHM  
Professor of Emergency Medicine,  
Emeritus

In the disaster response field we often plan for, train, and exercise for the worse scenarios. It is bad enough to have to deal with a single disaster, but what about when two occur at the same time? How about three?

Examples from the past include train derailments and HAZMAT incidents during earthquakes, and the grandfather of all the simultaneous disasters, the Great Kantu Earthquake of 1923. It occurred just before lunch hour. Tens of thousands of residents fled their homes and gathered in a large outdoor area, preparing their meals on Hibachi stoves. Winds from a simultaneous tropical storm came ashore in Tokyo, blowing ashes from their stoves which resulted in a massive firestorm that killed tens of thousands or people outdoors and destroyed 80% of Yokohama and much of Tokyo.

What our federal and state resources have been preparing for has just happened as I write



*Irving (Jake) Jacoby*

this. It's the “double whammy.” Category 4 Hurricane Laura has just come ashore causing major damage in Lake Charles, Louisiana and southeastern Texas, while historic wildfires rage across northern CA, each complicated by Coronavirus. With over a million people evacuated in the Gulf region, while tens of thousands have evacuated due to encroaching flames in the Bay area, the COVID-19 pandemic has redefined the template of how to prepare shelters for evacuees. With the requirement for wearing of masks and maintaining physical distancing of at least 6 feet, shelters have had to reduce their capacities to accept large numbers of evacuees. The hallmarks of large, open shelters have always been sleeping cots, for which it has

generally been recommended that they be somewhat distant from each other, and with guidelines to not have sleepers facing each other due to the known risks of respiratory infections contagion. Thus the usual advice to individuals sleeping on cots is to face the feet of the person in the cot across from them rather than their face. Despite this, respiratory and gastrointestinal infection outbreaks occur with regularity at shelters after 4 or 5 days and often result in significant problems for shelter residents. The current trend is for authorities to try to obtain sheltering sites with individual rooms, but that may not always be possible. Thus despite being sheltered from the elements after an event, until it is safe to return home, there is always the risk of a secondary event. San Diego County has embarked on purchasing hotels to serve as shelters for the homeless, and having individual rooms appears to be the way to go to provide shelter without the secondary risks from being housed in a shelter.

So what are the lessons for each of us? First, it is as important as it has ever been to have an individual disaster plan for yourself and for your families and pets, for sheltering in place and for evacuations.

This includes making and maintaining a list of all the things you would want to grab if you were told you had to evacuate immediately for a wildfire threatening your home. Copies of your insurance

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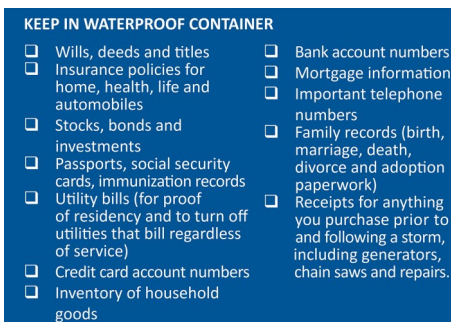
## Anecdote



policies and photos of valuable property is a start. Key documents that you cannot afford to lose (birth certificates, citizenship papers, copies of deed to your house, wills, prescription medicines, Medicare and insurance cards, should be easily situated so you can grab them in a moment's notice, and have copies digitized and saved to the cloud. Consider keeping the originals in a safety deposit box in your bank. There are so many tips and ideas that exceed the allowed size of this article but do go to <https://www.ready.gov/plan> to help you be ready. Be sure to add "bring extra masks."

If you have some sort of disability or mobility restriction, it is even more important. Consult an authoritative web site, such as <https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/shelterinplace.aspx> for more complete lists and ideas.

The second lesson is, do not delay in learning lesson number 1. Do NOT think it can't happen to you.



[San Diego Family Disaster Plan and Personal Survival Guide](#)



Once again The Washington Post has published the winning submissions to its yearly neologism contest, in which readers are asked to supply alternative meanings for common words. The winners are:

1. **Coffee** (n.), the person upon whom one coughs.
2. **Flabbergasted** (adj.), appalled at how much weight you have gained.
3. **Abdicate** (v.), to give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach.
4. **Esplanade** (v.), to attempt an explanation while drunk.
5. **Willy-nilly** (adj.), impotent.
6. **Negligent** (adj.), describes a condition in which you absentmindedly answer the door in your nightgown.
7. **Lymph** (v.), to walk with a lisp.
8. **Gargoyle** — olive-flavoured mouthwash.
9. **Flatulence** (n.), emergency vehicle that picks you up after you are run over by a steamroller.
10. **Balderdash** (n.), a rapidly receding hairline.
11. **Testicle** (n.), a humorous question on an exam.
12. **Rectitude** (n.), the formal, dignified bearing adopted by proctologists.
13. **Pokemon**, a Rastafarian proctologist.
14. **Oyster** (n.), a person who sprinkles his conversation with Yiddishisms.
15. **Frisbeetarianism** (n.), (back by popular demand): The belief that, when you die, your soul flies up onto the roof and gets stuck there.
16. **Circumvent** (n.), an opening in

the front of boxer shorts worn by Jewish men.

The Washington Post's Style Invitational also asked readers to take any word from the dictionary, alter it by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter, and supply a new definition.

The winners are:

**-Bozone** (n.): The substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas from penetrating. The bozone layer, unfortunately, shows little sign of breaking down in the near future.

**-Cashtration** (n.): The act of buying a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period.

**-Sarchasm** (n): The gulf between the author of sarcastic wit and the person who doesn't get it.

**-Inoculatte** (v): To take coffee intravenously when you are running late.

**-Osteopornosis** (n): A degenerate disease. (This one got extra credit.)

**-Karmageddon** (n): It's like, when everybody is sending off all these Really bad vibes, right? And then, like, the Earth explodes and it's like, a serious bummer.

**-Glibido** (v): All talk and no action.

**-Arachnoleptic fit** (n.): The frantic dance performed just after you've accidentally walked through a spider web.

**-Caterpallor** (n.): The color you turn after finding half a grub in the fruit you're eating.

And the pick of the literature:

**-Ignoranus** (n): A person who's both stupid and an asshole.



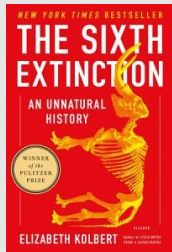
## UCSD Emeriti Assn. Book Club



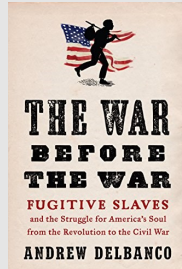
Until further notice, all Emeriti Association Book Club meetings will be held via Zoom. Please [RSVP](#) at least 24 hours prior to the event to receive the Zoom link via email.

Event date and time: Fourth  
Monday, 11:45 AM - 1:15 PM

**September 21**, "The War  
Before the War: Fugitive Slaves  
"by **Andrew Delbanco**



**October 26:**  
"The Sixth Extinction"  
by **Elizabeth Kolbert**



## Chronicles

Newsletter of the UCSD Emeriti Association



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*Forward queries, changes in mailing/email address to:  
Suzan Cioffi, Director, UCSD Retirement Resource Center,  
UCSD, 9500 Gilman Drive, #0020, La Jolla, CA 92093-0020.*

## Mark your calendar for Fall 2020 events!

### Fall Emeriti Association Meetings

RSVP [here](#) to receive the Zoom event link



**Wednesday, October 14, 2020**  
**3:30—5:00 PM, via Zoom**

"Everything is Design"  
presented by **Robert Brill**, Professor, Theater



**Wednesday, November 18, 2020**  
**3:30 PM—5:30 PM**  
*via Zoom*

"Perspectives on Public Health:  
Past, Present, and Future"  
presented by **Dr. Cheryl Anderson**