

Coronavirus: 3 Handouts

HANDOUT ONE

[According to Business Insider:](#)

The outbreak of a new coronavirus has sparked fear and anxiety around the world. The pneumonialike virus, which originated in Wuhan, China, has infected more than 9,700 people and killed 213 [as of January 31].... It should also be noted that many patients with coronavirus have ... made full recoveries.... According to Chinese officials, most of those who've died were elderly or had other ailments that compromised their immune systems.

Public health experts say that for the most part, panic over the Wuhan coronavirus outside of China is unproductive and unwarranted. The public should take precautions to avoid getting sick, but the most effective preventative measures are everyday actions like increased handwashing and not touching your face.

Amira Roess, a professor of global health and epidemiology at George Mason University, told Business Insider that fear would not stop the spread of the virus and could cause negative social impacts. "There's the spread of infectious disease, then there's the spread of panic," Roess said. "They have very different mechanisms." In the early stages of an infectious-disease outbreak, Roess added, much of the panic is "fear of the unknown."Psychological research shows novel threats raise anxiety levels more than familiar threats and that people tend to underreact to familiar threats."

[According to USA Today:](#)

[Take for example] "a virus out there that is frequently mutating, can get us very sick with fever, fatigue, and open the door for other life-threatening infections, including pneumonia. It passes easily from one to the other by coughing and sneezing and touching. It has already infected close to [20 million people here in the USA](#) and killed more than 8,000 since October..... The name of this virus is **influenza [a.k.a. the flu]**, and we know it well, it has been around for centuries, even if it is constantly changing and providing new challenges. Still, the fact that we are used to hearing about it causes us to take it for granted.

There is another respiratory virus, ... [with] an entirely new and powerful strain. It is creating havoc on the other side of the world, leading to entire regions being cordoned off, which has caused more hysteria which spreads more virus as people try to escape the restrictions. This coronavirus [has killed over a hundred people](#), probably much more, but it feels like a more imminent personal threat than it really is, because it is new, unknown, and we are hearing and thinking about it all the time

We need more answers to assuage our fears.... Worried people take fewer precautions, which can lead to more spread.... We fear the unknown and jump quickly to envisioning worst case scenarios. The emotional centers of our brain are too strong. When someone sneezes or coughs on us, we think coronavirus when we should still be thinking flu.

Discussion Questions

- What are your thoughts and feelings about the excerpt?
- What is the main point the author is trying to make?
- Give an illustration of their point with an example from the article.
- Did you learn anything new about the coronavirus from in the excerpt?
- Did you learn anything new about the flu from in the excerpt?

HANDOUT TWO

According to TIME:

Even as public health experts race to contain the novel coronavirus outbreak, a potentially more fearsome and shadowy pandemic—aimed at uninfected people unjustly fingered as potential carriers—grows.

Calls for bans on the movement of all peoples of Asian descent—which would subject millions of people to unnecessary and potentially life-threatening entrapment—are trending on social media, while in real life, the normal rules of social cohesion have started to break down. Outside a Chinatown restaurant in Sydney, Australia on January 29, for example, a 60-year-old man died from cardiac arrest, while bystanders reportedly refused to provide CPR for fear of catching coronavirus.

Societies facing novel [diseases] ... have often engaged in scapegoating of marginalized populations, especially when the infective source can be linked to a distant place and the disease associated with a racially distinct “foreign” peoples....

Erroneously blamed for HIV in the early 1980s, Haitians were beaten and harassed. Falsely scapegoated as carriers of SARS in 2003, Canadians of Chinese descent were kicked out of their homes and their businesses avoided....

Public fears of contamination by invasive foreigners reached a fevered pitch even before the first case of pneumonia at the Wuhan seafood market hit the news.

Right-wing populist leaders have for years singled out foreigners as vectors of crime, terror and disease, as if they alone posed such threats..... [Some] news outlets ... are now using the same inflammatory language to depict the coronavirus outbreak that they employ to describe people on the move, dubbing it a “viral invasion.” Such overtly alarmist rhetoric will almost certainly increase public pressure for discriminatory, unnecessary, and even unlawful policy measures aimed against socially disempowered populations.

Discussion Questions

- What are your thoughts and feelings about the TIME excerpt?
- What is the main point the author is trying to make?
- Give an illustration of their point with an example from the article.
- Why do you think “socially disempowered populations” are sometimes targeted or demonized in this way? What can we do to counter this?

HANDOUT THREE

[According to Business Insider:](#)

Nationals of Asian descent in France, Canada, and the U.S. are reporting incidents of racism because of public fears of the Wuhan coronavirus.

[The Guardian reported](#) nearly 9,000 parents near Toronto have signed [a petition](#) to prevent students who had traveled to China in the past 17 days from attending school. "This has to stop. Stop eating wild animals and then infecting everyone around you," one petition signer wrote. "Stop the spread and quarantine yourselves or go back."

The [New York Times reported](#) that businesses throughout Hong Kong, South Korea, and Vietnam have posted signs telling customers from mainland China they are not welcome.

Asian students at Arizona State University, meanwhile — where a U.S. case of coronavirus was confirmed — said they were facing jokes, stares, and isolation on campus.

"I cough in class and everybody looks at me," a Vietnamese American freshman at ASU [told Business Insider's Bryan Pietsch](#).

Misinformation about the coronavirus has spread as well — no, [oregano oil will not cure it](#), nor will [drinking bleach](#).

Discussion Questions:

- Discuss your thoughts and feelings about the article.
- What is the main point the author is trying to make?
- Give an illustration of their point with an example from the article.