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BIOMS 5665  
Final Reflection  
May 15, 2019

When I started at Cornell as a Freshman, I was excited about moving to Ithaca and looking forward to spending four years here. In my head, I loved the area and the town itself, everything from the Farmer's Market to the hiking trails to the shops and Ithaca culture. And as a Freshman, before arriving on campus I just assumed that living in Ithaca, even while going to Cornell, would be like living in my hometown: I would get to know people both on and off campus, and I would become part of a bigger community. However, I quickly realized after actually arriving on campus how much of a bubble Cornell can really be. I learned about the "town-gown" dynamics, and saw and felt how much time I spent interacting with other Cornell students as compared to other Ithaca residents, namely that I was only interacting with Cornell students, and I was disappointed; I did not end up building the town-vibe community that I assumed I would, and it felt like this was a missed opportunity, like something went a little wrong. I soon realized, though, after talking to my friends at other universities that this was normal. I was a little disappointed, but I stopped thinking about it. I moved on and kept going with my Freshman year. Now, four years later, this class has offered me many things, and one of them has been a more complete sense of connection to the Ithaca community. Seeing community members every week, chatting with them before class and getting to know them little by little on a regular basis, gave me a chance to finally feel like I was also a part of the Ithaca community outside of my student community on campus. I felt more connected to Ithaca as a whole.

Another major take-away that I got from this class was seeing how important and meaningful it is to consider the people-side of research and medicine. I feel like I always used to see research as disconnected from actual people out in the world, even if the research is on topics of medically relevant importance. I only saw research as something that existed within the walls of my lab. This class gave me a chance to see that people out in our communities are really interested in learning more about different topics in medicine, even if they are not from a STEM background. Since I will be pursuing research for the next two years in Boston, I am going to keep this in mind: people from my own hometown might really be interested in talking with me more about what I will be studying.

A final huge take-away from this class that I am bringing with me is that sometimes, topics that are challenging to talk about get ignored. Frequently, I see people in my own life avoiding talking about cancer because it's scary to them, and they are not sure how to talk about it. This usually leads to people just ignoring it all together, and I didn't realize how isolating or lonely this can be for someone who has cancer until my friend got Hodgkin's lymphoma. Being in this seminar showed me that talking about cancer and treating it normally is sometimes the best way you can be a friend to someone who has cancer. I think this really struck me the most in the beginning of the semester, when we were doing interviews.

Overall, I am so happy I got to take this class! And I am happy that there is a class out there that is connecting students to members of the Ithaca community to talk about such an important topic.