

# LIFE UNDER LOCKDOWN

*Photojournalism students confined @home get creative, by John Freeman, University of Florida*

When the university told students they should head off campus and go “back home” in mid-March, I wasn’t too worried. They could take our school-issued Canon T7i cameras and complete my introductory photojournalism assignments remotely. I would use Zoom for class meetings and then see their work dropped into Canvas. What I hadn’t anticipated was that many would stay in town in their I-live-alone apartments, and those who moved back in with parents would be confined inside at home. How could I modify the upcoming assignments for those who were homebound? “Quick Shoot” was a timed exercise normally done during lab times and “Event” required finding an off-campus activity that would produce a 10-image gallery. Those events – from farmers markets to musical concerts in the park – had dried up quickly.

Like many professors, I pivoted and modified assignment requirements and expectations. Could student use basic knowledge gained so far about composition and content to still shoot decent photographs?

I turned the Quick Shoot into an at-home assignment with four possibilities that were revealed on Canvas at 7 a.m. on assignment day. The Topics: Morning Light, Out My Window, Here’s My Pet, or How I’m Feeling (Selfie). They had a noon deadline to post two images.

The Event assignment was dropped entirely and replaced with “Food.” Two pictures were required: one without people, and the other had to include a hand, face or some human touch. To give them ideas, I posted a link to a generic “How to Photograph Food” site, and also a Facebook link to an alum of ours who was using the stay-at-home order as an excuse for nightly, highly stylized food shoots which were beautiful!

The goals were met with great success, and students said they enjoyed the chance to mix it up a bit after earlier assignments featured outdoor situations with strangers playing sports or enjoying the weather. One take-away from making these assignments was that it paid off by asking them up front for ideas and if they thought the assignments were doable and fair. This buy-in helped with motivation during tough times, and led to further superb work with their modified final project, a picture story with audio about a family member or even themselves for those who lived alone. Success breeds success.

