

NAME (LAST, FIRST): _____

MIDTERM EXAM

Sociology 190: Life and Death in the USA

Professor Nicholas Christakis

March 7, 2007

SHORT ANSWERS (20 minutes, 10 points each)

*Please answer **FOUR** of the following. Your answers should be 1-2 brief paragraphs, and should reference the readings whenever appropriate. If you find it helpful to draw a picture, please do so, but note that while a picture may help you make your point, it does not constitute a full answer.*

- 1) Describe one of the following ways of measuring health: Time Trade-Off Method, Standard Gamble, Visual Analog Scale. Briefly explain why it is useful.
- 2) What is an “Odysseus Contract” and how is this concept relevant to end of life care?
- 3) What is the “health transition”? Describe at least two important parts of the transition.
- 4) Discuss the difference between “formulated” and “communicated” prognoses, and provide at least one practical reason this difference is important in patient care or public health.
- 5) Explain how the relationship between SES and health might vary across the life course of an individual (in terms of its intensity and/or direction).
- 6) What is the difference between ‘disparate outcomes’ and ‘different outcomes’? That is, what counts specifically as a health “disparity” and what does not?
- 7) Describe the findings of Diane Lauderdale in her paper on discrimination, and briefly explain her methodological approach, identifying why it was so instructive.
- 8) Why is it important for researchers or policy-makers to age-adjust mortality rates? Discuss why this technique may be useful when interpreting data.

(TURN TO NEXT PAGE, PLEASE)

ESSAY (30 minutes, 60 points)

Choose ONE of the following. A good answer will refer to the readings where possible. Pay attention to the fact that we want your essay to be as organized, clear, and comprehensive as possible. A good essay will advance an argument, or make the case for a point of view, rather than merely summarize the readings.

1) We have considered the concepts of social construction and medicalization. How does such a perspective on illness differ from more “objective” measures of morbidity? How does such a perspective on health influence patient experience or outcomes? How does such a perspective influence physician behavior or obligations?

2) We have been introduced to the idea of a “fundamental cause” of disease, specifically in the context of socioeconomic status. Define and explore the concept of a fundamental cause of disease and discuss how income or education is a fundamental cause. As part of your answer, identify one additional social factor other than income or education that might be a candidate “fundamental cause” of disease, and briefly analyze how.

3) Review and critically evaluate evidence for the role of medicine and medical care in improving health in the last century. For what kinds of diseases and/or in what circumstances does medical care seem to be an important factor in improving life span and health, and for what diseases or circumstances is it not? Identify non-medical factors that have been critical to improvements in public health or that are instrumental in individual health.

NOTE: YOU CANNOT LEAVE THE ROOM WITH THIS EXAM. PLEASE BE SURE TO SUBMIT IT WITHIN YOUR EXAM BOOK(S).