Soc190 Midterm 2008

NAME (LAST, FIRST): _____

MIDTERM EXAM

Sociology 190: Life and Death in the USA

Professor Nicholas Christakis

SHORT ANSWERS (20 minutes, 10 points each)

Please answer FOUR *of the following. Your answers should be 1-2 brief paragraphs, and may 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 by itself.*

1. What is the health transition? [Hint: a good answer will briefly describe all four phases.]

2. What is the compression of morbidity? Name at least one reason it matters.

3. Explain the Hispanic paradox and name one possible explanation for its existence.

4. What is the adaptive standard for defining health? Give an example of a condition that would be considered a disease state according to this standard but that would not necessarily be considered a disease state according to other standards.

5. Define what is meant by "social construction" and name one example of a condition that has been socially constructed. Briefly explain why this matters.

6. Describe the survey vignette method [Hint: it involves randomizing survey subjects] and give one example of how it was used in the class.

7. What is the self-fulfilling prophecy? Name one mechanism that could account for it in medicine. And name one consequence of physicians' belief in the self-fulfilling prophecy.

8. What does Illich mean by "clinical" and "social" iatrogenesis?

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ESSAY (30 minutes, 60 points)

Choose ONE *of the following. A good answer will refer to the readings where possible (naming the author is not necessary -- you can just briefly describe the article's topic, if you want). 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) Using obesity, smoking, or roadway fatalities as an example (just pick <u>one</u>), discuss the topic of "structure" versus "agency" as ways of understanding the determinants of individual and collective health in the US. Explain what is meant by these terms. Explore the implications of these two perspectives for the health problem you picked by discussing different public health interventions that might be developed depending on which perspective one adopts; be sure to discuss health interventions arising from both perspectives.

2) Socio-economic status and health are related. Pick a <u>single</u> social attribute (education, income, *etc.*) and describe how it is associated with health (e.g., using one or more measures of health status). Describe and evaluate at least <u>two</u> competing hypotheses for the *causal* origins of the association between the social attribute you pick and health. (Hint: a good answer will discuss both directions of causation.)

3) When trying to explain the occurrence of medical errors, there are at least two approaches, one focusing on "bad doctors" and one focusing on "bad systems." What is the difference between the two? Give some examples. What are the implications of these two approaches for limiting the occurrence and frequency of medical harm? Describe some disadvantages of each approach.

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