

NAME (LAST, FIRST): \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION LEADER: \_\_\_\_\_

**MIDTERM EXAM**

**Sociology 190: Life and Death in the USA**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Please use two blue books for this exam, one for the short answers and one for the essay. Please be absolutely sure to put your name on both books (do it now!). For the essay question, please put the number of the question you answer on the cover. For the short answer questions, please put the three numbers of the questions you answer on the cover. Please be sure to return this exam itself in your essay blue book.

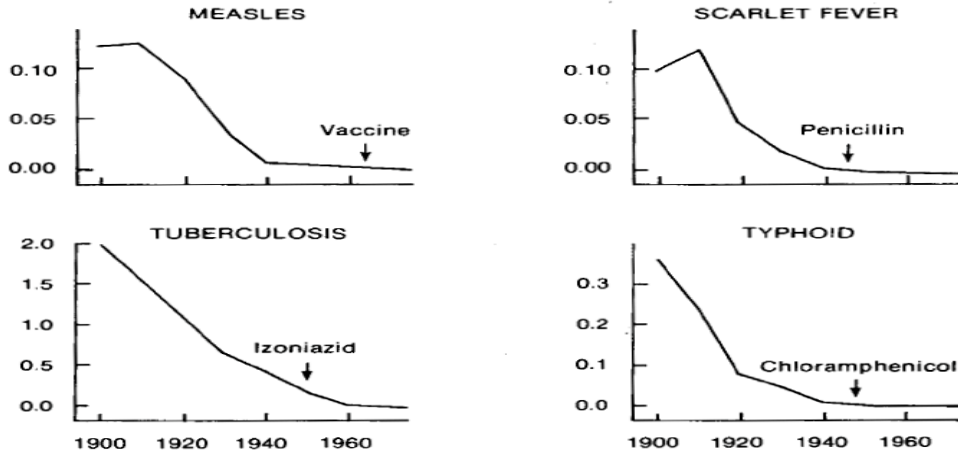
**ESSAY (30 minutes, 55 points)**

*Choose ONE of the following. A good answer will refer to relevant readings where possible (naming the author or work is preferred but not necessary -- you can just briefly describe the article's topic). Your essay should be as organized and clear as possible. A good essay will advance an argument, making the case for a point of view using relevant references rather than merely summarizing the readings. Answers will probably range in length from 400-700 words or so.*

(1) The tension between structure and agency is a key theme we have been exploring. Describe two situations or circumstances: (a) one situation in which the medical establishment recognizes and encourages the agency of the patient with respect to his/her own medical care, and (b) another situation in which it does not. What do you think might be some reasons for the different emphasis on structure versus agency in these two situations? Be sure to explain what is meant by "structure" and "agency."

(2) Although medical technologies can extend the length of life, they can also negatively affect the quality of life, especially at its end. What might this mean for patients, for their families (e.g., their spouses), and for society as a whole? [Hint: with respect to society as a whole, you might want to discuss how the health care system should respond to this phenomenon, or discuss the compression of morbidity, or engage something else you think is relevant.]

(3) Describe the argument being made in the figures below [on the next page] regarding the role of medical care and socioeconomic changes in decreasing mortality in the 20th century. Based on the material from the course, give examples of some mechanisms underlying the improvements in health seen in our society in the past century. Do you find the argument compelling? What are some limitations of this argument?



**SHORT ANSWERS (25 minutes, 45 points)**

Please answer THREE of the following questions. Discuss the meaning or significance of the term or concept. Your answers should be 1 or 2 brief paragraphs and may include a pertinent reference (if that seems reasonable).

- (1) Define what is meant by “social construction” and name one example of a condition that has been socially constructed. Briefly explain why this matters.
- (2) What does Illich mean by “clinical” and “social” iatrogenesis?
- (3) What is the “health transition”? Describe at least two important features of the transition.
- (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) What is an “Odysseus Contract” and how is this concept relevant to end of life care?
- (6) Describe two interventions have been effective against smoking, and describe how they work.
- (7) Describe the basic finding in the paper on birth weight in Arab Americans by Diane Lauderdale, and briefly explain her methodological approach, identifying why it was so instructive.
- (8) What is meant by the “swiss cheese” model of medical harm reduction?

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