

MIDTERM EXAM #1 (2011)

Sociology 190: Life and Death in the USA

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

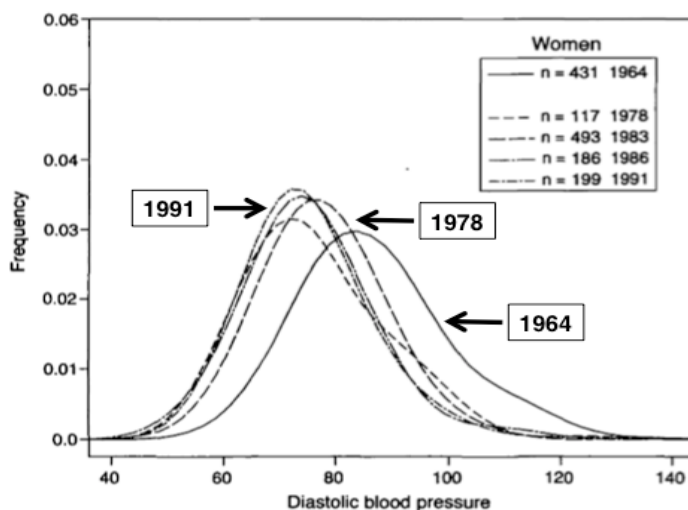
Please use two blue books for this exam, one for the short answers and one for the essay. Please be absolutely sure to put your name on both books (do it now!). For the essay question, please put the number of the question you answer on the cover. For the short answer questions (overleaf), please put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

ESSAY (30 minutes, 55 points)

Choose **ONE** of the following essay topics to address. A good answer will refer to readings or lectures where relevant (you can mention a name or the title or just 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 rather than merely summarizing the readings. Feel free to draw a figure if it is helpful. Answers will probably range in length from 400-700 words or so.

- (1) Using information from lectures and from the reading, characterize a "good death" by discussing at least three factors that are considered by most Americans to be a part of a "good death." We learned that most Americans do not achieve such deaths. Define "structure" and "agency." Identify at least one factor related to structure and one factor related to patients' agency that helps explain why Americans might not have good deaths.
- (2) Describe the association between income and an outcome like clinical depression. Discuss one pathway or mechanism through which income might affect depression. Discuss one pathway or mechanism through which depression might affect income. What else, if anything, might account for the observed relationship between income and depression? Might the direction of the relationship between income and depression change across the life course? If so, speculate on this pattern.
- (3) Curiosity about the explanation for an observed decline in coronary disease spawned the World Health Organization's MONICA project in the 1980s. This 10-year study recruited people in 21 countries. One of the key questions in the study was this: could any declines in blood pressure noted over the 10-year period be attributed to its treatment, or to some other factors? The MONICA study yielded data similar to the data from yet another study as shown below. In an essay, describe what these data show. What does the pattern in the data say about the possible medical versus social causes of the decline in Blood Pressure in the past 50 years?

Distributions of Diastolic Blood Pressure in 50-year-old Danish Women, during 1964-1991



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 a brief paragraph (and typically less than one blue-book page) and may include a pertinent reference (if that seems relevant or reasonable).

- (1) What is the “health transition”? Describe at least two important features of the transition.
- (2) Define what is meant by “social construction” and name one example of a condition that has been socially constructed. Briefly explain why the social construction of this condition matters.
- (3) In the context of preventing medical errors, what is meant by the “swiss cheese” model of medical harm reduction?
- (4) Describe just one of the following ways of measuring health: (i) Time Trade-Off Method, (ii) Standard Gamble, and (iii) Visual Analog Scale. Briefly explain why it is useful.
- (5) What is the Hispanic Paradox? What might explain it?
- (6) What does the figure below provide evidence for, and why is this evidence important? [Source: P. Kristensen and T. Bjerkedal, “Explaining the Relation Between Birth Order and Intelligence,” *Science* 2007; 316: 171]:



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