

Name (Last, First): \_\_\_\_\_ HUD: \_\_\_\_\_ TF (Last): \_\_\_\_\_ Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

MIDTERM EXAM  
Sociology 190: Life and Death in the USA  
Professor Nicholas Christakis

Please answer TWO of the following three questions. We expect essays to be approximately 3 pages (800 words). A good essay will advance an argument, or make the case for a point of view, rather than merely summarize the readings. Pay attention to the fact that we want your essay to be as organized, clear, and comprehensive as possible. You are not expected to do any readings or research other than those assigned in class or discussed during lecture, though you are free to. Please briefly cite any references to which you refer (e.g.: Smith, 2009). This exam must be your own effort.

FORMATTING:

- 12pt Times, double spaced, 1" margins (no exceptions!)
- Begin each essay on a new page
- Write name *and* HUD on this cover page; write *ONLY* your HUD at the top page of each essay

SUBMISSION:

- Paperclip together: a) this cover page; b) first essay (stapled by itself); c) second essay (stapled by itself)
- Upload *ONLY* your exam (no cover page needed) to the course website dropbox by 5pm Fr. 3/13
- Deliver hard copy to WJH 568 between 2-5pm Fr. 3/13 (go early – save yourself a wait in line!)

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1) Discuss the relevance of the phrase “A rising tide lifts all boats” in the context of health disparities. How do you think this phrase applies? Have medical advances over the last 50-100 years benefited all equally? Have they alleviated social disparities in health or exacerbated them? Provide examples to support your case. Be specific about which social attributes you are considering, and which health outcomes. And briefly discuss some of the origins of the disparities (where do they come from in the first place?). If you think that disparities have *increased*, discuss why medical advances may not, in fact, have been able to be implemented in a way that decreased the disparities. On the other hand, if you think that disparities have *decreased*, discuss why medical advances have in fact been able to be implemented in a way that has successfully decreased the disparities.

2) Internet addiction, shopping addiction, gambling addiction, alcohol addiction: more and more, repeated behaviors and/or use of certain substances are being labeled “addictions.” How would you define what an addiction is? Do you think having an addiction to something, generally, is a medical condition? Are all addictions worthy of medical attention? Why or why not? If you think that some addictions are deserving of medical attention and others aren’t, where do you think medicine should draw the line between addictions that are worthy or unworthy of medical care? What does your answer to these questions say about how illness is defined and detected, how people experience it, and how doctors respond to it?

3) View the photos and also carefully read the captions from the 2007 Pulitzer Prize Winning photo essay regarding the terminal illness of 10-year-old Derek Madsen (URL below – these photos may be hard to look at). Then, write an essay about the ways our society and our health care system might be better organized to meet the needs of patients and families like this one. Give specific examples of deficits, if any, in Derek’s care, as well as any aspects of his care that struck you as commendable. Identify the extent to which positive and negative aspects of his care could be attributed to his family’s choices and actions, and the extent to which they could be attributed to the health care system. Finally, suggest two policy interventions (things you think the health care system and our society might do differently) that might help patients and families like the Madsens. <http://www.pulitzer.org/works/2007.Feature+Photography>