Medical Sociology Comprehensive Exam Questions
Department of Sociology, Portland State University
January 11th, 2010

Answer ONLY TWO of the three questions below. Each answer should be 10-15 double-spaced pages NOT including references. Include separate reference list for each question in ASA format. Answers to questions should be typed in 12 point Times New Roman or Arial fonts.

This exam is due at 9:00 AM on Tuesday, January 19th, 2010. Graded exams will be returned by Monday, February 15th at 9:00AM. Emailed exams will be accepted. You may also turn in hard copies to the Sociology Department by the deadline.

Email both answers as a single or separate documents to:

Matt Carlson: carlsonm@pdx.edu
Margaret Everett: everettm@pdx.edu
and copy Pete Collier: cfpc@pdx.edu

1. Describe the relative contributions of medical care, personal health behavior, genetics and social stratification (including social class, race/ethnicity, and gender) to individuals' health status. Be sure to include some discussion about the role of social structure and the role of fundamental causes and explain how sociologists use these terms.

2. To what extent are racial/ethnic disparities in health and health care linked to socioeconomic inequalities, and how are they separate from them? Describe the theoretical and methodological approaches used to disentangle the complex relationship between race, SES, and health.

3. Why is the American health care system in urgent need of reform? Describe the current state of health care financing and organization in the US including the distribution of health care providers, services, and health insurance coverage, access to health care, health care quality, and cost. Be sure to provide examples of how the U.S. compares to other industrialized countries in terms of access, quality and cost.