

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
PH.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH
AUGUST , 2021**

You are required to answer THREE (3) QUESTIONS (ONE QUESTION FROM EACH OF PARTS A, B & C). Each answer should be 10-12 pages (12-point font, double-spaced, and standard margins) in length. The complete exam text should not total more than 36 pages in length (12-point font, double-spaced, and standard margins), NOT including references. THE COMMITTEE WILL NOT READ MORE THAN 36 PAGES of TEXT.

PART A

- 1) Numerous calls have been made for a comprehensive approach to understand health that draws upon multiple disciplines from areas including social science, public health, medical science, and life science. Sociology has a role to play in these discussions. Drawing on the articles on the reading list, and identifying gaps in the list if you see any, provide a balanced view of the strengths and weaknesses of sociology as a discipline in engaging contemporary health issues.
- 2) The study of social/socio-spatial contexts is a core part of the sociological approach to understanding health issues. Critically discuss the theoretical and methodological issues surrounding the study of social/socio-spatial contexts in sociological research on health. Discuss new directions that might further scientific understanding in this area of work.

Part B

3. Some research on the social determinants of health focuses on macro-level issues (e.g., national politics, healthcare systems), while other research targets the micro level (e.g., everyday discrimination, social support). Critically evaluate our current conceptual tools for connecting these levels of analysis. What are the integrative models that incorporate macro- and micro-level explanations? And what are the needed next steps for building comprehensive and informative models of social causation in the sociology of health?
4. Does research on (bio)medicalization help us understand COVID vaccination in 2021? You may choose to focus on one issue related to vaccination (e.g., vaccine hesitancy, vaccine passports, vaccine profits), or to several issues. In your answer, make an argument for how the case of COVID vaccines supports, challenges, extends, or complicates current understandings of (bio)medicalization.

Part C

5. Outline the strengths and weaknesses of the theory and research on the reading list for studying and potentially explaining the historical pattern of deaths of children in residential schools in Canada, and potential health problems of residential school survivors. Outline how the ideas, theory and findings presented in the readings on the list in the areas of political economy, biopolitics, health among those in marginalized social positions, and other areas of the list are potentially relevant to those patterns and their sociological implications.

6. How are gene-environment interactions (including epigenetics) relevant to sociological studies of class and health? In answering comment on environment at multiple levels (e.g., from the level of childhood family to broadly defined macro-environments, such as “national culture”). Specify at least three environmental “levels” ranging from micro to macro, and note limits to gene-environment interactive processes, or the conceptualization of those processes, at each level of environment. Refer to specific illnesses in your answer (you can speculate about illnesses and are not constrained to material on the list).