

**Graduate Preliminary Examination
Life Course and Aging
August 22-23, 2002**

PART I: Theory and Methods

Answer each of the following two questions:

1. The life course perspective has spread throughout the sociological literature beyond the field of aging. Selected core concepts of this perspective have been especially useful across areas. Identify three of these core concepts then (a) define each and its theoretical origins and (b) summarize recent empirical applications of these concepts in aging research and in one other substantive area of your choosing. Have these concepts required further theoretical specification across different fields in order to be analytically useful? If so, how?
2. Longitudinal methods form a substantial portion of the life course research toolkit. What do we mean by longitudinal methods, especially as they refer to sampling of subjects, measurement of variables, and the analysis of relationships among variables? Select and summarize in detail the longitudinal methods employed by two studies published within the last 5 years, which you consider to be exemplary of life course research. What special methodological challenges did each of these studies face?

PART II: Substantive Areas

Answer one of the following questions. Please cite additional literature to that to which you refer in Part I above:

3. Research in aged inequality and in medical sociology have converged in recent years as a result of shared interests and databases. Identify one major question on which they have converged and summarize it. What do you consider to be among the most important studies addressing this question? Review at least two these studies in detail. What major questions remain to be answered with respect to this problem?
4. Demographic and normative trends have reconfigured the family. Life course research has contributed significantly to our understanding of these trends. Please identify major changes in the family and summarize key studies documenting these changes over the last decade. What are the implications of the results of these studies for future research on the family from a life course perspective?