CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for Topic 2: Disease Models of Addiction

I will look for and grade your constructive participation in seminar discussions of these questions. I expect everyone to participate and will call on you as needed. Feel free to write out some of your thoughts ahead of time. Please note that my grading of your participation will be heavily dependent on your ability to draw from the assigned readings and my online lectures; simply offering your own personal opinion is not enough.

1. Americans seem to hold different attitudes about alcohol versus other drugs. One difference is that we are more likely to view alcoholism as a disease than drug addiction. Another difference involves how the 'exposure' and 'susceptibility' versions of the disease models are applied. Discuss these different views of alcohol and drugs, and also discuss the implications of this difference.

2. As you know, the idea that addiction is a disease is widely held in the U.S. But as you also now know, it is a model, not a statement of scientific fact. Taking a pro or con position (but not both—no fence-sitters!), argue for or against the value and legitimacy of this model, defend your position with logic and evidence; try to focus on one specific core assumption.

3. Given what was stated in #2, that the disease model of addiction is not a scientific fact, and also that many people (including perhaps some of you) do not find it to be a valid or useful model, how then can we account for its popularity? Why do so many people—addicts and professionals alike—endorse it so strongly? How and why has it influenced alcoholism treatment?