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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

TITLE OF THESIS: THREE ESSAYS ON THE ECONOMICS OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
TIME/DATE: 2:00 pm, Wednesday, April 18, 2018
PLACE: Room 3107, The Mona Campbell Building, 1459 LeMarchant Street

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Dr. Arthur Sweetman, Department of Economics, McMaster University
(External Examiner)

Dr. Peter Burton, Department of Economics, Dalhousie University (Reader)

Dr. Casey Warman, Department of Economics, Dalhousie University
(Reader)

Dr. Shelley Phipps, Department of Economics, Dalhousie University
(Supervisor)

DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE: Dr. Daniel Rosenblum, Department of Economics, Dalhousie University

CHAIR: Dr. Kazue Semba, PhD Defence Panel, Faculty of Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers three vignettes on the determinants of health and well-being over the life course. The first essay uses multiple Canadian census files to document the long-term effects of *potential* in utero exposure to the 1918 flu pandemic on educational attainment. This study finds that those who were in utero during the peak of the pandemic, particularly in their first or second trimesters, experienced long-term deficits in their educational attainment. The second study explores the potential impact of spousal institutionalization in nursing homes/residential care facilities on elderly financial security. It shows that the absence of fully funded universal long-term care insurance (i.e. Canadian Medicare) places married seniors at risk of significant losses in their material standards of living and poverty. The third paper examines the impact of online communication and social media use on subjective well-being (SWB). In one empirical approach, I find that those who communicate online or use social media report lower levels of SWB. This is especially true for older adults and social media. In a separate quasi-experimental analysis that exploits variation in access to and use of social media by time, age group, and access to personal computers, I find that social media may be responsible for increased political engagement and social trust.