

**Thinking with Thinkers – Erving Goffman**  
**SOC 498.20: Winter, 2020; Instructor: Dr. P. Cormack**

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**Office hours:** Monday, 11:00-12:30; Tuesday, 9:30-10:30; Wednesday, 11:30-1:00; Friday, 10:30-12:30.

This advanced 4<sup>th</sup>-year seminar offers an in-depth look at the work of Erving Goffman (1922-1982), who remains one of the most cited and discussed sociologists in the world. Goffman's unique approach focused on everyday face-to-face interaction (the "interaction order") as foundational to understanding social life. This course will demonstrate the continued relevance of Goffman to contemporary life.

**ASSESSMENT:**

- Five essays (about 1000 words each)/presentation of essays = 50 points
- Submitted reading notes and participation in group discussion in class = 50 points.

1. Essays – Use one Goffman reading from each section (see below) to analyze an everyday occurrence (e.g. classroom interaction, a job interview, living with roommates, the party scene, studying, shopping, working out, visiting the doctor, dealing with professors, living on social media, dating, etc.). Show the relevance and *importance* of applying Goffman to this particular scenario and explain why you picked this occurrence to illustrate Goffman's ideas and concepts. Be sure to *identify and explain all central concepts* from this reading. Half of your essay grade (25 points) will involve the presentation and discussion of your essay with the class.

2. Submitted reading notes and participation in group work - This is a student-driven seminar with emphasis on student writing, presentations and participation. Students who miss more than five classes will forfeit their participation grade. These students will be given the opportunity to write a final exam to make up their lost participation grade (50 points).

Submitted reading notes for each class – Use the following guidelines to prepare your notes:

- a) locate the thesis sentence/paragraph
- b) list and explain the key concepts
- c) locate the most interesting line/paragraph (explain your choice)
- d) locate a witty, ironic, or sarcastic line (explain its meaning)
- e) give an example from the "interactive order" that displays Goffman's main idea

*Please hand in a copy of your discussion notes at the beginning of each class and keep a second copy for class participation.*

## **Required Books**

Goffman E. (1959) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.

Goffman, E. (1961) Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates.

Goffman E. (1963) Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity.

Goffman, E. (1967) Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior.

## **Reading /Essay Presentation Schedule**

Jan 8 - "Symbols of class status" (1951). (moodle)

Jan 13 - "On Cooling the Mark Out: Some aspects of adaptation to failure" (1952). (moodle)

Jan 15 - "On Face-Work"(1955) in Interaction Ritual.

Jan 20 - "The nature of deference and demeanor" and "Embarrassment and social organization"(1956) in Interaction Ritual.

### **Jan 22/27 – ESSAY #1 DUE (PRESENT TO CLASS).**

Jan 29 - "Alienation from Interaction" (1957) and "Mental symptoms and public order"(1956) in Interaction Ritual.

Feb 3 – "Where the Action Is" (1967) in Interaction Ritual.

### **Feb 5/10- ESSAY #2 DUE (PRESENT TO CLASS).**

Feb 12 - "Introduction", "Performances", "Teams" (1959) In The Presentation of Self in Everyday life.

\*\*\*\*\*BREAK\*\*\*\*\*

Feb 24 – "Regions and Regional Behavior" "Discrepant Roles", "Communication out of Character", In The Presentation of Self....

Feb 26 - "The Arts of Impression Management" and "Conclusion" In The Presentation of Self...

**March 2/4 – ESSAY #3 DUE (PRESENT TO CLASS).**

March 9 - “On the Characteristics of Total Institutions” (1959) In Asylums.

March 11 - “The Moral Career of the Mental Patient” (1959) In Asylums.

March 16- “The Underlife of a Public Institution” (1961) in Asylums. **OR** “The Medical Model and Mental Hospitalization: Some Notes on the Vicissitudes of the Tinkering Trades”.

**March 18/23 – ESSAY #4 DUE (PRESENT TO CLASS).**

March 25 – “Stigma and Social Identity”(1963) in Stigma. (p. 1- 19 only), “Information Control and Personal Identity” in Stigma.

March 30 – ““The Self and Its Other”, “Deviations and Deviance” in Stigma. **OR** “The Arrangement Between the Sexes.” (1977) (moodle).

**April 1 – ESSAY #5 DUE (PRESENT TO CLASS).**