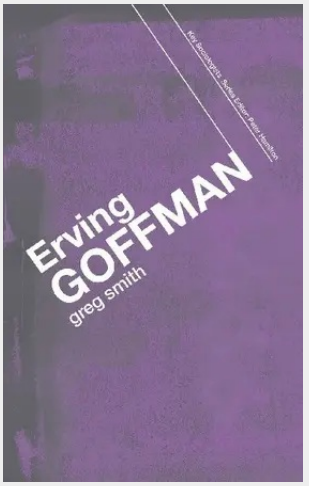
Smith

Erving Goffman



Decades after his death, the figure of Erving Goffman (1922–82) continues to fascinate. Perhaps the best-known sociologist of the second half of the twentieth century, Goffman was an unquestionably significant thinker whose reputation extended well beyond his parent discipline. A host of concepts irrevocably linked to Goffman's name – such as 'presentation of self', 'total institutions', 'stigma', 'impression management' and 'passing' – are now staples in a wide range of academic discourses and are slipping into common usage. Goffman's writings uncover a previously unnoticed pattern and order in the minutiae of everyday interaction. Readers are often shocked when they recognize themselves in his shrewd analyses of errors, awkwardness and common predicaments. Greg Smith's book traces the emergence of Goffman as a sociological virtuoso, and offers a compact guide both to his sociology and to the criticisms and debates it has stimulated.

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