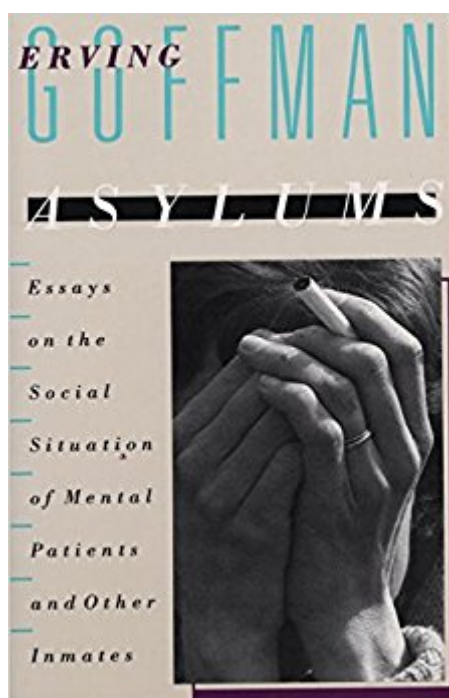


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# Asylums: Essays On The Social Situation Of Mental Patients And Other Inmates



## Synopsis

Asylums is an analysis of life in "total institutions" -- closed worlds -- such as prisons, army training camps, naval vessels, boarding schools, monasteries, nursing homes and mental hospitals -- where the inmates are regimented, surrounded by other inmates, and unable to leave the premises. It describes what these institutions make of the inmate, and what he or she can make of life inside them. Special attention is focused on mental hospitals, drawing on the author's year of field work at St. Elizabeth's in Washington, D.C., one of America's most well-known institutions. It is the thesis of this book that the most important factor in forming a mental-hospital patient is the institution, not the illness, and that the patient's reactions and adjustments are those of inmates in other types of institutions as well. The first essay is a general portrait of life in a total institution. The other three consider special aspects of this existence: the initial effects of institutionlization on the inmate's previous social relationships; the ways of adapting once in the institution; and the role of the staff in presenting to the inmate the facts of his or her situation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Asylums is an analysis of life in "total institutions"--closed worlds like prisons, army camps, boarding schools, nursing homes and mental hospitals. It focuses on the relationship between the inmate and the institution, how the setting affects the person and how the person can deal with life on the inside.

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the new book "john taylor gatto" "THE UNDER GROUND HISTORY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION" has a list of books and I found this one "Asylums: ESSAYS" how it ties to EDUCATION

I'm not a sociologist, a student of sociology or really, even that interested in sociology. I read about this book in David Orland's, Prisons: Houses of Darkness, where Orland often referred to Goffman's work in this book. I was not disappointed. Goffman uses a mixture of field observation and references to literature to describe and criticize the theory and practice of the "Total Institution". As the reviewers note below, a "total institution" is an elastic concept. Goffman focuses on "strong" examples of T.I.'s: the mental hospital, prison, a 19th century man of war, monastery. Through these "strong" examples he fairly describes the concept and applies it well. Less clear is the implications of Goffman's concept to those institutions which are either "weak" total institutions or non-total institutions with total institution tendencies. After reading this book, I saw aspects of "total" institutions in almost every institution I cared to think about: schools, churches, courts, etc. I think it is fair to say that "All institutions dream of being total institutions." Therefore, this book has application beyond the world of "strong" total institutions. I recommend it highly.

This book can be challenging at times..You cant just read and put it down and expect to pick it back up again and know exactly what's going on. Goffman takes a very in depth look on the inmate situation focusing primarily on mental institutions. The personal stories of what these people go through and the things that Goffman witness while observing inmates really brings this book together. I think he focuses a lot on the development of the self when taken out of a familiar setting and placed into a new one. He talks about how to cope and what the staff does to help the inmates adapt to their new life. He can get wordy and redundant but all in all I think it is a rather good read. If you're in a social theory class or mental health student, I would recommend this book.

Very nice historical review

great book and came in great condition

Love Goffman's work. His work here was informative as the study of inmate/mental patients was not done yet.

Excellent condition , The concepts are as true today as when the book was first written,a must for any student studying the social sciences.

A must have for the young sociologist to understand how our society works as a group and how that trickles down to affect the behavior of the individual in the group. If you are a thinking person with sociological questions, this is part of the Canon of social science.

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