

THE DELANEY DOSSIER: GOFFMAN MATERIALS

1972: Social Interaction class (Anthropology 666). As best I can recall, EG did not mark up or comment on my paper on make-up, and I found out my grade only when the end-of-term report card was issued through regular university channels. (I suspect that he was bored with the subject-matter and turned off by my overly imitative, “Goffmanian” treatment of it; in all likelihood, he had thought through the topic in his own terms much earlier in the game.)

Included are my (rather cheeky) answers to a short mid-term exercise for the Social Interaction class, dated October 1, 1972. As written up in my reconstructed class notes, the assignment was as follows:

Class exercise. Write a mini-paper of two pages on the following topics. Be incisive and brief. Use your native wit.

1. Address some issues that might be involved in using the lay term “couple” as a technical term.
2. Discuss this exchange:
Customer: “Do you have coffee to go?”
Waitress: “Cream and sugar?”
Customer: “Just sugar, thanks.”*
3. Criticize the territorial typology in Goffman’s “Territories of the Self,” Chapter 2 of *Relations in Public*.

* In “The Interaction Order” (p. 15), Goffman later examined this customer-waitress exchange in terms of “the unstated assumptions in servicing regarding who qualifies as a serious candidate.” Thus, the laconically responsive reply of the waitress (“Cream and sugar?”) implicitly validates the customer’s implicit order for coffee to go, posed in the form of a question. But this ratification might well be withheld, and further interrogation ensue as to pecuniary resources at hand, if the person doing the tacit ordering was, to all appearances, a destitute street bum.**

** [Footnote to the footnote: my analysis of the exchange largely tracks with EG’s eventual account, although his, naturally, is accomplished with far more concision, precision, and flair.]

My parting jibe (last page) about Henry Kissinger was occasioned by a slide of a news photo seemingly showing him slyly preparing to put on a display of gravitas for the camera.

MAKE-UP

The Social Dramaturgy of A Bodily Art

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