

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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*Office of the Provost*

Madame President, I present as a candidate for the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, Erving Goffman, Benjamin Franklin Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania.

In preparing for the doctorate which he received at this University in 1953, Erving Goffman embraced three of the orientations which had distinguished the "Chicago School" of sociology: a substantive interest in the forms of interaction which organize everyday social life, reflecting the Department's attention to Georg Simmel; a methodological interest in fine-grained reportage based on close observation of human transactions in natural settings, following the Department's concern for representing the lifeways of urban neighborhoods and social types; and an analytic interest in the ways human actors construct worlds of meaning and personal selves, derived from local attention to the work of pragmatist philosophers.

In the gallery of ingenious papers and monographic studies which he produced in the subsequent quarter century, Goffman synthesized these traditions in a highly distinctive manner and framed an analytic perspective that provided a key for transforming the field of microsociology. Exemplary in the scientific rigor with which he has searched for the regularities of interaction process, Goffman has humanized the enterprise by substituting the metaphors of play and theater for the older metaphors of organisms and mechanical systems. By discovering and interpreting invisible patterns of interaction in public places and the hidden devices by which humans sustain their sense of selfhood, he not only has revitalized the social psychological tradition of the old Chicago school and transmitted it in unforgettable terms to the international community of scholars but has created a new angle of vision for the understanding of human experience.

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It is with great pleasure, Madame President, that I present  
Erving Goffman for the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

*David Levine*  
*Autumn 1979*