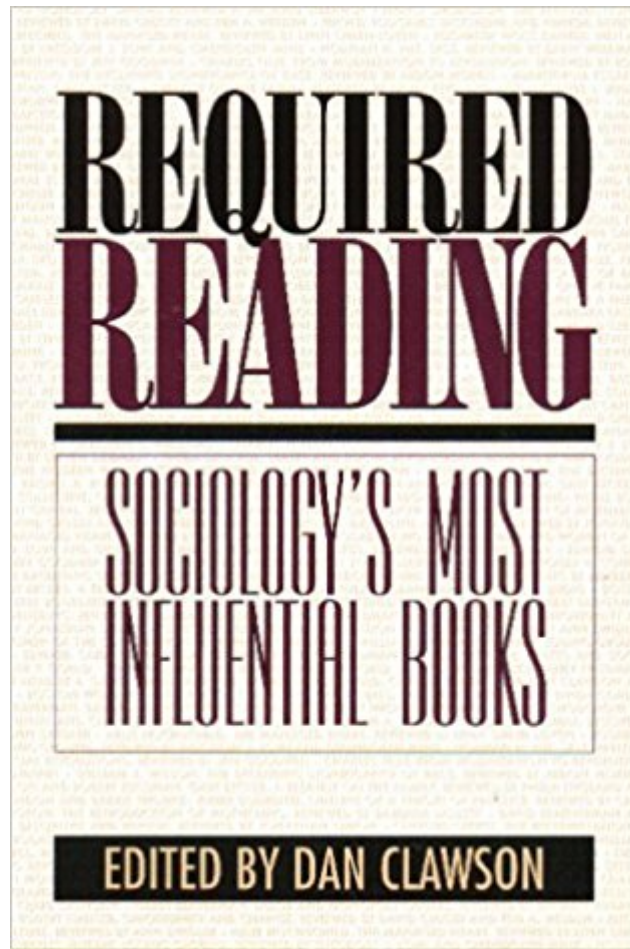


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Required Reading: Sociology's Most Influential Books



Synopsis

When the editors of Contemporary Sociology selected the ten most influential books of the past twenty-five years and published new essays on their importance, the feature sparked enthusiasm, debate, and controversy. This volume responds to and extends that discussion by expanding the list to seventeen books, incorporating a piece on the bestsellers of sociology, and adding four essays on the "most influential" controversy itself. Although the list centers on sociology, only half of the books were written by sociologists. The charge to the reviewers was not to make a case for a book, but rather to analyze the character and extent of its influence. Because these works are already recognized as milestones in their fields, and because the reviewers are prominent figures who themselves often played central roles in the dramas surrounding these titles, the reviews are as noteworthy for their critical edge as for their celebration of the books' contributions. The result is a thought-provoking volume that engages many of the key intellectual issues of our time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The title of this work is somewhat misleading. Clawson is actually trying to pull together what have been the most influential books in social theory in general (and then throws in a couple of concessions to mainstream American sociology, most notably 'The American Occupation Structure'). 'Orientalism', for example, has not made much of an impact on sociology. Nevertheless, this is a worthwhile effort. Sociologists should be encouraged to read widely and not take their efforts to turn into economists (i.e. reducing social behavior to mathematics) so seriously. Most of the essays are worth reading. Putting 'Our Bodies Ourselves' on the list was a stroke of genius. The

real problem is that the choices are so odd. Clawson claims the choices are weighted towards the seventies because that is when more key texts were published. Hah! 'Imagined Communities', first published in 1983, is more influential than all but four or five of the chosen works here. So is 'Gender Trouble', which has cast a much longer shadow than 'Men and Women of the Corporation'. 'City of Quartz' and 'The Condition of Postmodernity' are other notable exclusions. Clawson's choices seem more a reflection on his own lack of interest in recent developments than on those developments themselves.

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