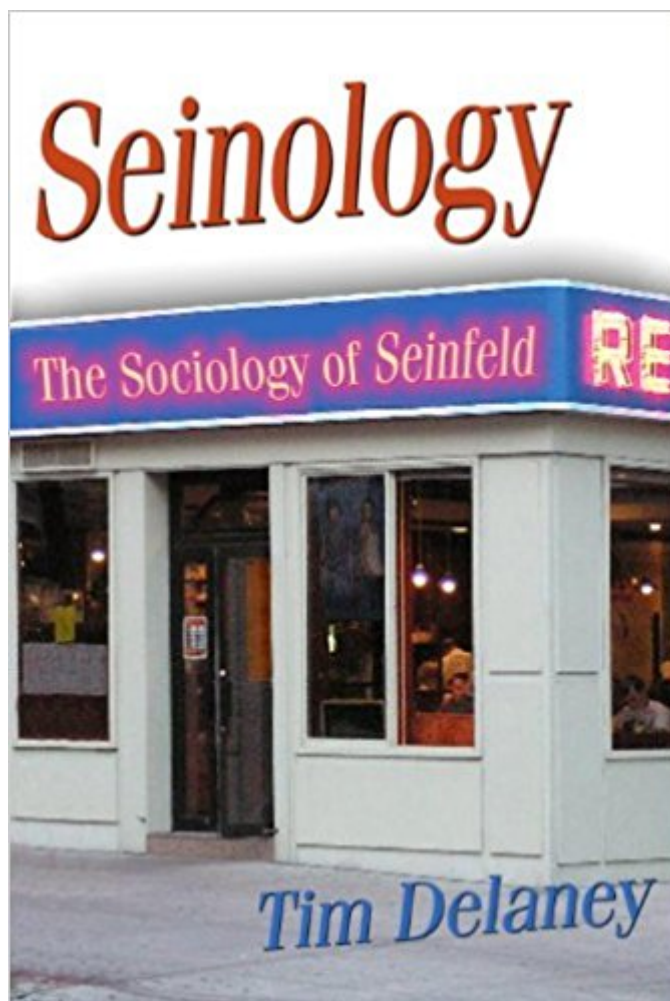


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Seinology: The Sociology Of Seinfeld



Synopsis

Sociologist and avid Seinfeld fan, Tim Delaney explores what sociologists and all interested readers can learn about themselves and their society from this tremendously popular sitcom. His work represents a fascinating blend of popular and contemporary culture with the keen observations of a scholar trained to assess social behavior. Delaney uses excerpts from many of the now-classic episodes to illustrate key facets of social interaction. In fifteen chapters, amusingly titled after some of the show's famous incidents, he reviews what its characters teach us about ourselves and the complex society in which we live. Fans of Seinfeld will enjoy reliving their fondest memories associated with each episode. Students and laypersons alike will learn basic sociological concepts and theories in this jargon-free work. Seinology provides Seinfeld fans an opportunity to view this brilliant television show through the sociologist's well-trained eye.

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Customer Reviews

In the 1990s, the immensely successful sitcom Seinfeld brilliantly used humor to reveal America's obsession with moral behavior. Delaney, who teaches sociology at the State University of New York, Oswego, claims the show examines the same issues as sociology: race, ethnicity, deviance, crime, and personal relationships. True, Seinfeld offered layered and sophisticated observations about social interactions. But Delaney's analysis is superficial. Obvious statements like "The police have a tough job" and "Social interaction plays an important role in an individual's life" are followed by plot summaries from various episodes. While Delaney aims for a chatty style, his personal comments are sophomoric: "There are a number of behaviors that are not criminal but perhaps

should be. For example, 'picking your nose' in public, I believe, should be illegal." His tedious writing is rife with repetition. Seinfeld is an ideal forum to illuminate social norms and anxieties, and worthy of serious academic critique; alas, this shallow offering isn't it. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Delaney offers a unique and entertaining look at many sociologically relevant social topics covered in the popular Seinfeld television sitcom....the book has a number of strengths....[he] does such an excellent job describing each segment, including giving the necessary background information, that even students who are unfamiliar with the show could easily follow along....the book is written in a very clear, understandable, and down-to-earth style that would most likely be a welcome relief for most students from the standard textbook format....finally, the book and its many Seinfeld examples are entertaining. At various points while reading I found myself laughing out loud....it would probably be extremely useful for popular culture, media and society, and similar courses."Teaching SociologyJournal of the American Sociological Association"This book is an engaging and entertaining way to learn basic sociological concepts and perspectives. Tim knows his sociology and knows his Seinfeld. He writes in a jargon-free, reader-friendly style, whether the reader is a student in an introductory sociology course, an advanced sociology student, or just a fan of Seinfeld. Tim is truly master of his domain. No yadda-yadda here. You'll be amazed at what Seinfeld and Delaney can teach you about work, gender, sex, crime, family, religion, sports, aging, and death. I recommend this book to everyone interested in painlessly learning more about the sociologists' take on life."Norm WeinerDistinguished Service Professor of SociologyState University of New York at Oswego"Delaney takes a brilliant approach to understanding sociology, one that students will both enjoy and understand. Through episodes of Seinfeld, Delaney illustrates sociology to the reader that any audience can identify with. Pairing sociological concepts with Seinfeld's humor he creates Seinology. In doing this Tim Delaney takes us through the major fields in the discipline providing real examples of how sociology can be seen in daily activities. This book would make an excellent reader for any introduction to sociology or media class."Cherylynn Bassani, Ph.D.Researcher and InstructorUniversity of British Columbia

I love Seinfeld and came across this title while watching the "Notes about Nothing" on the DVD. I started reading it and it was alright, basic sociology going on. Then the author was comparing it to Seinfeld episodes, this is where I got upset. For Delaney being such a "huge fan" of Seinfeld, he couldn't keep facts about episodes correct. I found many mistakes in describing Seinfeld episodes.

When describing the Van Buren Boys episode, Delaney says that Kramer escaped violence because they thought he was an OG, original gangster. Why use this term? The episode didn't, they just thought he was a former member. Or when talking about George's family, they say he mentions a brother once to the psychic and probably did it to make himself believe the psychic. When in fact he mentioned a brother in The Parking Spot when telling Elaine that every one in his family are good parkers, his mother, his brother, his father. When describing The Package episode, he confuses events and writes them in the wrong order. Or when describing The Hot Tub, he says Jean-Paul, Jean-Paul won the race, when in fact, he got hot tea from Kramer and drank it and screamed, why does Delaney think he won and it was a happy ending like he wrote? There are quite a few mistakes like this and it was very frustrating reading this book with so many of them; most of them trivial, but for a huge fan it seems like Delaney really didn't do his research.

Great read for a Seinfeld nerd. He's not really saying anything that I haven't already thought to myself... analyses of the episodes and characters haven't really changed my life. However, as an academic myself, I appreciate Delaney's writing. It's clearly a great balance of his own reflections with well researched primary sources. A fun, quick read for the avid Seinfeld junkie.

The Publishers Weekly review is spot on. Half-baked quasi-thoughts from the discipline's yeasty year, combined with troublingly absurd prognostications, won't do much to satisfy sociologists or introduce you to the discipline. The mediocre plot summaries are buttressed by more detail about the show's 186 episodes than PW admits, and about which Delaney clearly knows a great deal, but there's not enough new or interpretative to do much for Seinfeld fans. The combined weaknesses will simply frustrate anyone who is BOTH a sociologist AND a Seinfeld fan. If you want to be the master of your domain, either disciplinarily or zeitgeistian, you'd do as well (nay, better) to find plot summaries online, open to a random page in any Sociology textbook, and discover or invent connections on your own. It'd be cheaper, more fun, more social, and (since Delaney's Sociology is somewhat shallow, and his Seinology sometimes overbearing) more educational. I suspect that the book will sell well as a function of its title, despite the arguable poverty of its content. Maybe Delaney's snickering like Neuman, or maybe he's as incomplete as Kramer. But if you fancy yourself as having a fraction of Jerry's clarity, perception, and/or frugality, keep on shopping - IMHO, this isn't it. OTOH, if you crave for more of a show eight years passed its cancellation (and the outtakes on DVD releases simply aren't enough) and/of if you don't know anything Sociology and want to pretend that you do without actually learning much about it, there

are clearly those (see other reviews, here and elsewhere) who've found value in this volume - not that there's anything wrong with that, just that there's not clearly something right about it, either.

I found a few errors, but I'm a Seinfeld fan and not a sociologist, so take the comment for what it's worth. I'm also not a student, either, but found this to be worthy reading edutainment.

In a more scientific way, a very good analysis of the social relations among the characters. What's best: it leaves you with a smile in your face at every page, as you think 'that's right, they did it!'. I recommend!

Seinology is an entertaining book for Seinfeld fans, but it's long on plot summaries and short on analysis. The organization of the book is thematic, exploring such topics as religion, sexual relationships, family, and sports. For a book with academic pretensions, Seinology lacks a strong central thesis and sufficient analysis. Delaney too often simply strings together scenes from shows that deal with various topics without analyzing what Seinfeld had to say about them. For example, when Seinfeld had an episode about a circumcision (The Bris), what was it saying about this religious practice or religion in general? That such rites are ridiculous? That religious people are crazy? Many other shows addressed the subjects Seinfeld made fun of. But how did these views differ from, say, the view of "Friends" or "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" on relationships or religion? In short, Delaney doesn't get under the surface of what made Seinfeld unique (and brilliant). He shows that Seinfeld, as with sociology, explores many aspects of human behavior. Okay. But I think he could go further than that. I will venture that Seinfeld's take on human nature was that most people are functionally insane. Critical readers, not to mention critical Seinfeld fans, will come away from this book very hungry. Furthermore, from a literary point of view, some statements Delaney makes would get flagged in your average senior thesis. For example, do I really need to know that he fantasizes about Christina Applegate? Not really. The book also has some sloppy proofreading errors. This book makes for fun reading, but the great book about Seinfeld has yet to be written.

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