



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
POLICY, SOCIOLOGY
AND CRIMINOLOGY

Sociology at the
University of
Birmingham

An Introduction

This document is intended to give you a quick introduction to both the discipline of Sociology and our department here at the University of Birmingham. It also offers you some ways to prepare for the start of your course should you wish to, with recommended reading and resources. Information is also provided regarding upcoming Q&A sessions and how to reach out if you want to get in touch.





HELLO FROM YOUR ADMISSIONS TUTOR

Hello everyone. My name is Dr Frankie Rogan and I am a Lecturer in the department of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology at the University of Birmingham. I am also the Admissions Tutor for the department so you may have met me if you've attended open days or offer holder days in the past. We are looking forward to welcoming you to our department in September and are working hard to prepare for your arrival. I hope you find this document useful, and we look forward to you joining our department soon!

What is Sociology?

In its broadest sense, sociology is *the study of society*. The 21st century has witnessed rapid social changes, in terms of our personal relationships, communities, identities, politics and the technologies we use. Our degree equips you with the tools to understand the drivers of this change as well as the challenges these present to our societies. The breadth of the discipline means that no area is out of reach for a sociologist. Sociologists study everything from crime to cults, sex to technology, work and employment to consumption, the media to the economy, and beyond.

Whatever our area of exploration, Sociology at the University of Birmingham is underpinned by three key questions:



1
What are the key social processes
shaping contemporary societies?



2
How do these relate to our
everyday experience?



3
How do we develop a 'sociological
imagination' to describe and analyse these
dynamics?

Key Concept: Social Divisions

The term 'social divisions' is often utilised in sociological thought and it refers to *patterns of division* in society - e.g. division based on gender, class or ethnicity. In sociology, we think about the role these social divisions play in organising our interactions, identities, communities and spaces. We also think about the relationship between social divisions and social inequality.

Questions we might consider when studying social divisions are:

- How equal is contemporary British society?
- What is 'social exclusion'?
- What is social class and how do we define it?
- How are life chances shaped by social divisions such as 'race', ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality and disability (amongst others)?

Geoff Payne's book *Social Divisions* offers a good introduction to and overview of this topic.



Something To Read...

While there is no expectation that you have read anything before starting your course, you may be looking for something to do over the summer. I've had many emails asking for recommended readings so please feel free to pick one or two of the texts listed here.

There are also some more in-depth recommendations and staff favourites on the following pages!



Social Divisions

edited by Geoff Payne (several editions)



The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology

by Aldon D. Morris (2016)



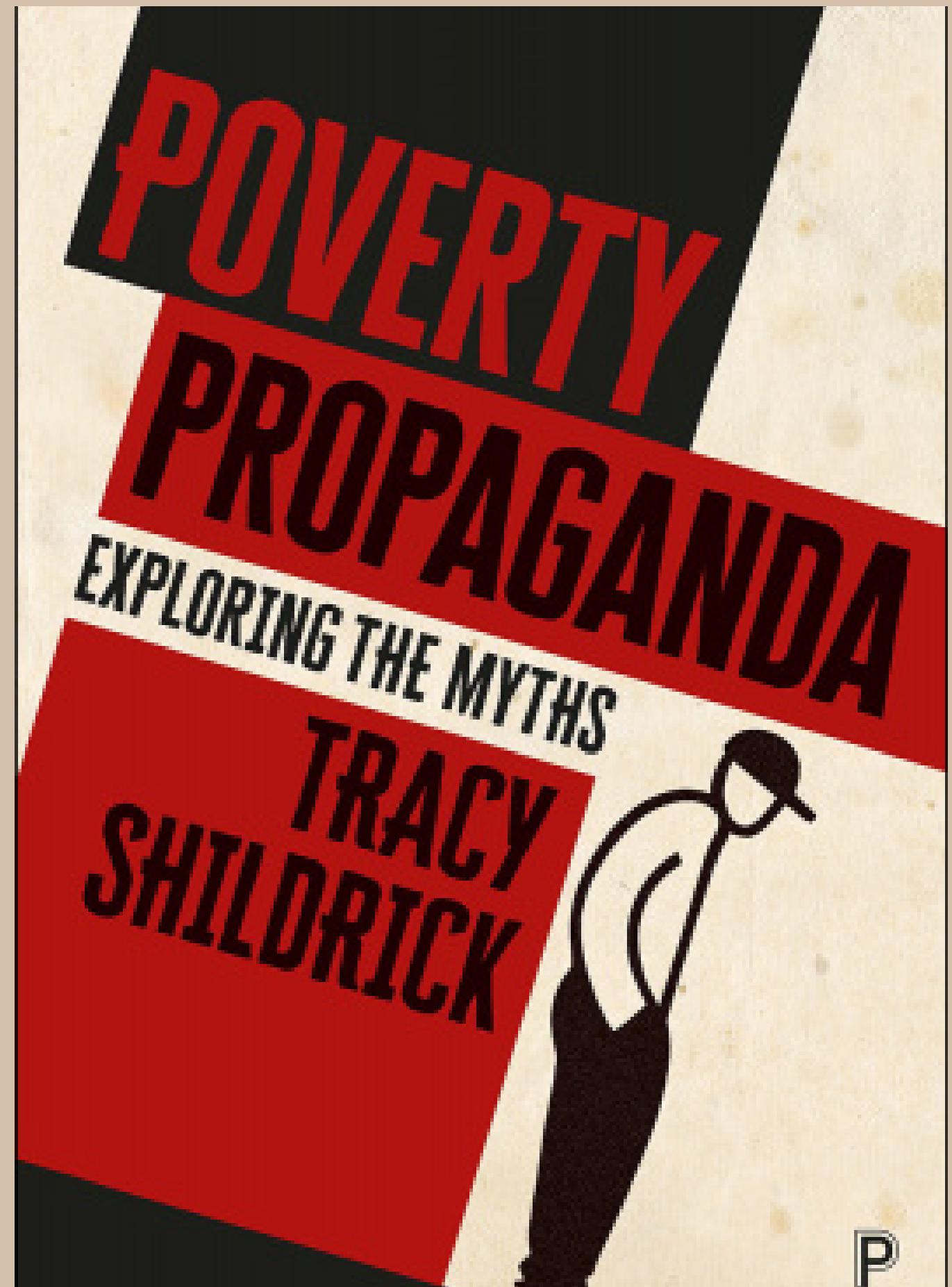
The Sociological Imagination

by C. Wright Mills (1956)



The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

by Erving Goffman (1959)



Recommended by
Dr Emily Ball

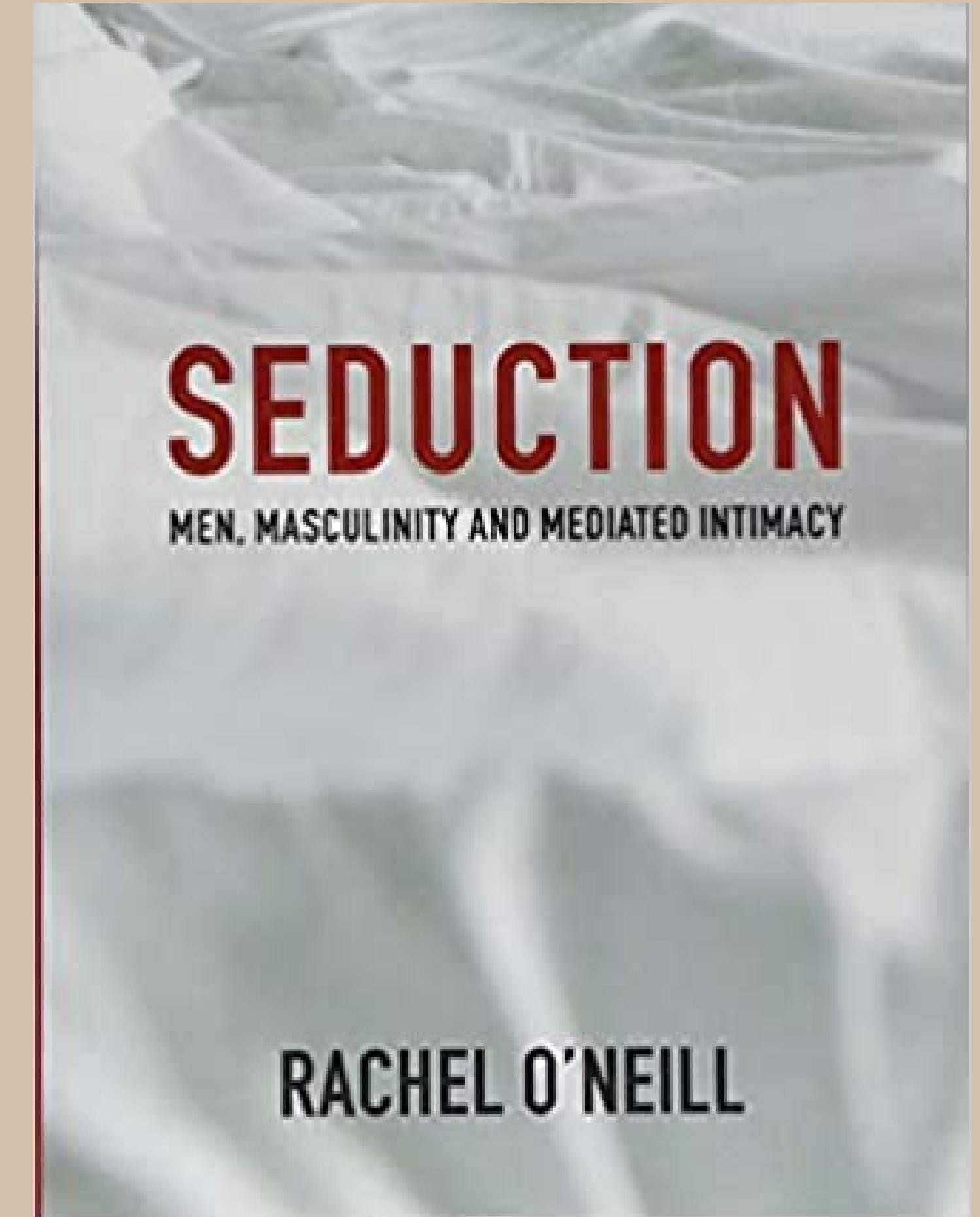


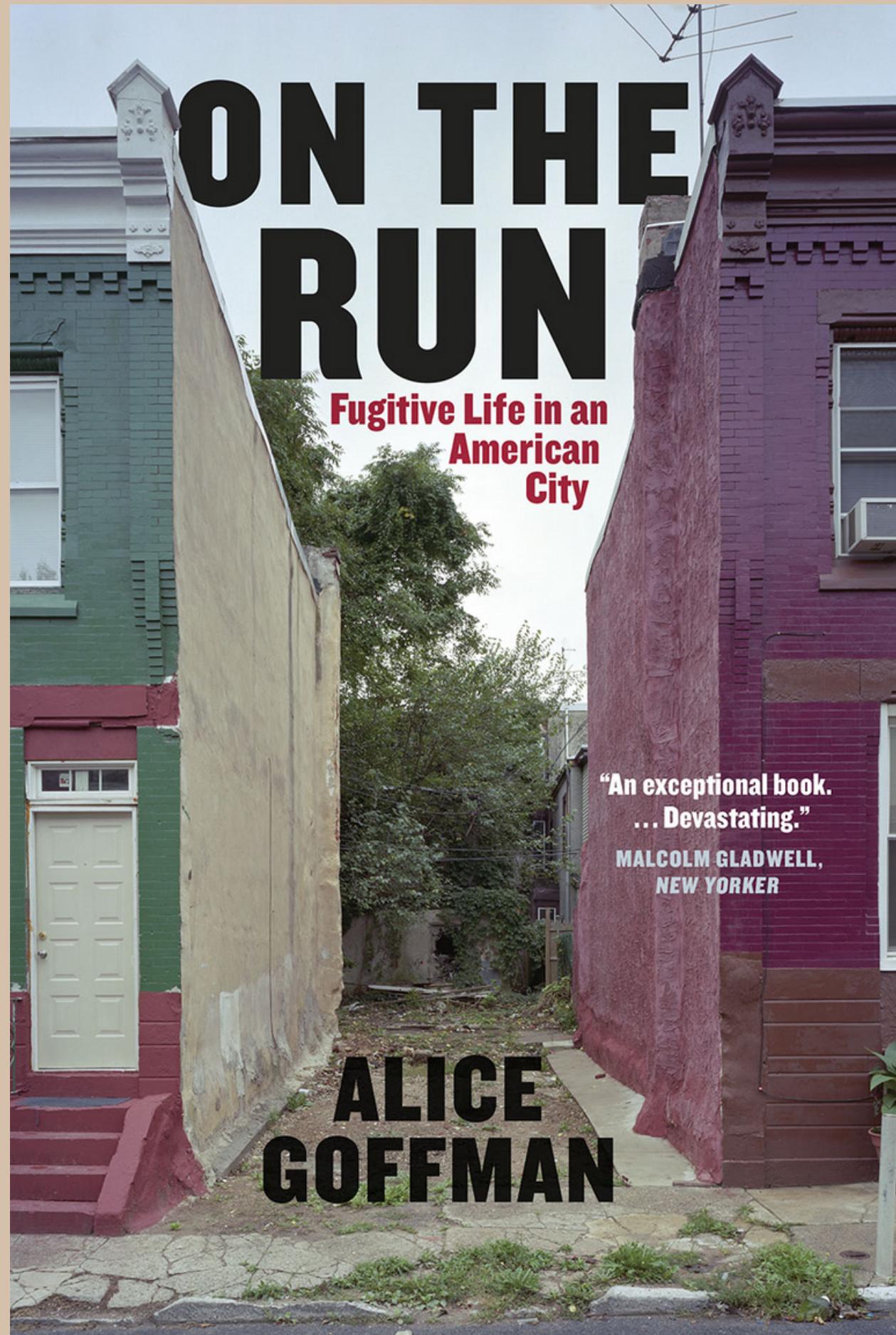
"Tracy Shildrick's *Poverty Propaganda* explores how poverty is understood and experienced in contemporary Britain. It does a great job of challenging many of the prevailing myths and misconceptions around the causes of income inequality. Shildrick has explored issues of poverty and inequality for many years and you can listen to her discuss some of this work on an episode of *Thinking Allowed* [here](#)"



Recommended by Dr Frankie Rogan

"If you are interested in gender and sexuality, then *Seduction* is a great text. It is based on Rachel O'Neill's ethnographic research into the so-called 'seduction community' and explores how things like *neoliberalism* and *postfeminism* (key terms you may encounter during your degree) intersect with sex and intimacy. You can also read an interview with the author of the book [here](#)"





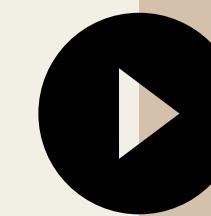
Recommended by
Professor Simon Pemberton



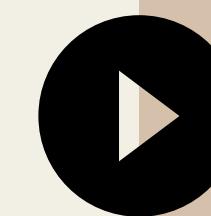
"Alice Goffman's *On The Run* is based on her ethnographic research of a Philadelphia neighbourhood and touches upon a range of issues that may be of interest to sociologists and criminologists alike: policing, surveillance, crime, and inequality. The book also sparked a debate around research ethics in the social sciences. These debates speak to some of the key issues that will be explored during your degree programme and may be interesting for you to think about. You can read some of these debates in several online publications, such as [The New York Times](#)"

Something to Listen To...

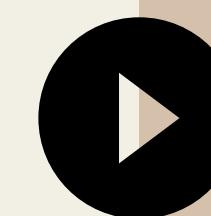
There are also some great sociology podcasts available via many of the mainstream providers (e.g. Apple, Spotify, Spreaker). Some recommendations have been listed here, but there are lots of others, so feel free to explore and find your own too!



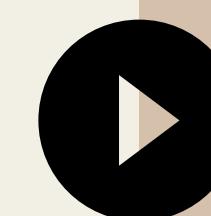
Surviving Society



The Sociology Show



Thinking Allowed



The Sociological Review

Online Resources



DISCOVER SOCIETY

Discover Society is an online journal which cuts across politics, economics, sociology, criminology and social policy – a truly social science publication. But it is also written for the non-specialist. As such it offers lots of topical debates and discussions which will be relevant to your studies: <http://discoverociety.org/>

THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigour, journalistic flair

The Conversation is a website which contains short articles on a range of subjects written by academics. These articles are written in a more journalistic fashion than ordinary academic articles and is a great resource to help keep up with current academic debates: <https://theconversation.com/uk>

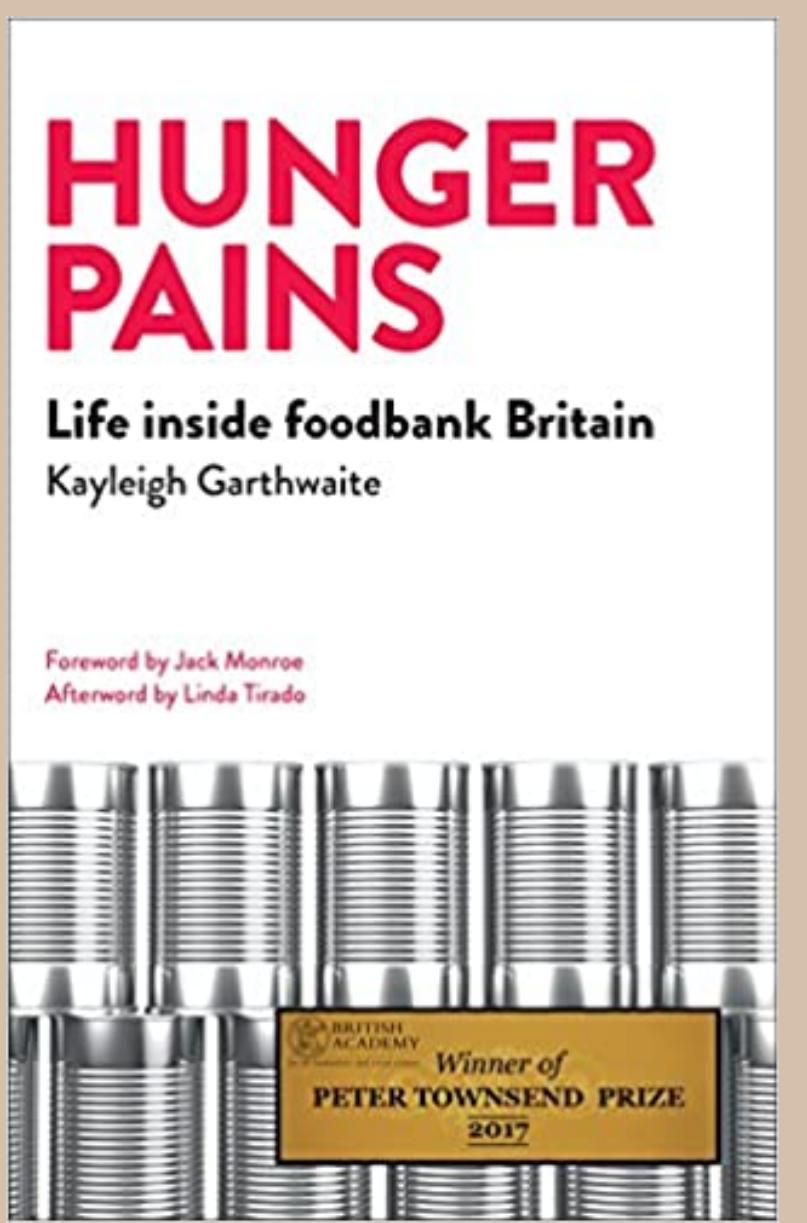
Our School - the School of Social Policy has recently launched a bi-monthly e-magazine, *Social Policy Matters*, where our students and academics share innovative research and opinions across the areas of sociology, social policy, criminology, health service management and social work. Feel free to check out the latest issue [here](#)

Social Policy Matters



Staff Research:

Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite



You may know that our department is full of active researchers who explore a number of timely and relevant topics in their work. For example, Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite has conducted award-winning research into the issues of poverty, stigma and food bank use. She is also currently part of a project called Covid Realities, which is a research programme looking into the experiences of parents and carers on low incomes during the pandemic.

You can listen to Kayleigh talk about her work on food banks [here](#)

CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

There will be a final Q&A session with Frankie Rogan on Thursday 3rd July. Please do register and attend if you would like to ask any questions!

Please also feel free to get in touch with us at any time. If you have any general questions relating to the department, please do not hesitate to contact us on:

ug-sp-soc-crim@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Follow us on Twitter (@UoBSocial) and Instagram (@uobsocpol) for regular updates.

