



Midwest Sociological Society Distinguished Book Award

Description

The MSS Distinguished Book Award is presented to a book, published by a member of the Society in the previous three years, which makes an exemplary, original, and substantive contribution to sociological understanding. The award carries a cash prize of \$250.

Rationale

The Midwest Sociological Society sponsors the Distinguished Book Award in order to recognize the outstanding contributions to sociological research, theory, and policy analysis produced by its members in the form of books. The award helps to fulfill the scholarly Mission of the Society of “advancing sociological knowledge.”

Criteria

1. The Award is granted to a single work of scholarship, written by one or more authors, rather than to a body of work.
2. Nominated books must have been published in the three copyright years preceding the start of the annual competition. For example, for the 2021 competition, eligible books would be copyrighted in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Once nominated, a book remains eligible for the full length of its eligibility.
3. Books that have already won scholarship awards from the American Sociological Association (including one of its section awards), other sociological associations, or other book prizes *are eligible* to win the Award.
4. To be eligible for the Award, nominated books must advance sociological knowledge in an original, substantive, and exemplary way. These include scholarly books and monographs, whether published in paper or online. Excluded are dissertations, textbooks, supplementary texts and readers designed for classroom use, works of fiction, overly technical treatises in methodology and statistics unlikely to support sociological research in the near future, book-length reports for institutes, organizations, and non-profit agencies that are published in-house for targeted audiences or the media, self-published books, and books written for general audiences that offer perspective on social issues but do not advance sociological knowledge appreciably. Edited collections of original essays may be eligible when they amount to collaborative work in the pursuit of new sociological knowledge (e.g., DiMaggio and Powell’s *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*), but not when they assemble commentaries or conference papers in gestures of devotion or affiliation. Books in visual sociology may be eligible when they contain sufficient textual material to advance sociological understanding of the subject matter. Films, videos, and collections of photographs and archival documents are ineligible for the Award.
5. Nominated books may be as diverse as the membership of the MSS and include: books in any field of sociological study (including but not limited to the fields organized as “sections” of the American Sociological Association); books on teaching and learning that focus explicitly on teaching and learning in sociology; books on social problems, social policy, social welfare, crime, corrections, and other areas of application of sociological research; books on intellectual history that feature sociological thinkers and their antecedents or shed light on the contexts in which sociology developed; and books in feminist theory, critical theory, and public sociology that contain original research interpreted in a value-centered framework.
6. **Authors of nominated books must be members of the Midwest Sociological Society and have some history of involvement in activities of the Society**, such as participation in its annual meeting or publication in its journal. Such involvement need not be extensive, long-term, or include service to the Society. Where co-authorship is involved, at least one author must meet the criteria of membership and involvement. These criteria are not meant to disadvantage new or younger members of the MSS in the competition, but to encourage them to contribute to the intellectual vitality of the Society.

Procedures

1. The Award competition is organized annually.
2. Each year, the current President of the MSS shall appoint an ad hoc Book Award Committee of 3 to 5 members and name its Chair by April 30th. The term of service is one year. Reappointment is allowed, but no one may serve more than three consecutive terms. Current officers and state directors of the Society may not serve on the Book Award Committee during their terms in office.
3. The Chair of the Book Award Committee shall distribute a copy of the procedures to the members of the committee, in order to ensure their familiarity with the competition's criteria and procedures. This document is also available on the MSS website.
4. Complete nominations shall be submitted to the MSS Executive Office by Oct. 31st. At its discretion, the Committee may extend the deadline for nominations until deliberations have begun. Once deliberations have begun (i.e., once nominated books are being sorted into categories of better and lesser through discussion or voting), no further nominations may be accepted for the current competition year.
5. Nominations may be made by anyone; MSS membership is not a requirement for the nominator(s).
6. **A complete nomination** consists of a one-page letter identifying (1) the nominated book's title, author(s), publisher, and copyright date; (2) the nominated author(s)' contact information (name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, email address, and phone number); and (3) a short paragraph indicating why the nominated book deserves to win the competition. In addition, (4) nominators and/or authors are responsible for arranging three (3) review copies to be sent to the MSS Executive offices (MSS Executive Office, 6001 Dodge Street, ASH 383, Omaha, NE 68182), for use by the committee members. *A complete nomination consists of all four elements.* At its discretion, the Book Award Committee may reject an incomplete nomination outright or obtain the missing information or book on its own. In no case may a Committee name as a winner of the competition a book read by less than a majority of its members.
7. The standards that the Book Award Committee uses to evaluate nominations for the MSS Distinguished Book Award are set by the Committee itself. The Committee may wish to consult previous Award Committees to maintain consistency in standards. Unsolicited comments, letters or emails received in support of any particular nomination should not be circulated within the Committee or used in the evaluation process. The judgment of the Committee is final. No appeal process accompanies this proposal, nor should one be created ad hoc to adjudicate a contested decision. The Book Award Committee is solely responsible for the decision-making process and its outcome during its year in existence.
8. The Book Award is designed to recognize a single book published in the last three copyright years. There are no second and third place awards. Every effort should be expended to make finer and finer distinctions until a single work emerges as the selection of the Committee. However, if the Committee is unable to make a decisive distinction, making the selection of a single winner an arbitrary choice, the Award may be divided among two books of equal merit. Each co-winner will receive the same \$250 cash prize, to be divided equally among any co-authors, but the plaque each receives will indicate that the recipient is the co-winner of a single Award.
9. At its discretion, the Committee may also grant one or two books each year honorable mention status. *Such recognition should be granted only at the end of a book's period of eligibility.* Authors of books designated honorable mention status will receive a letter on MSS stationery from the Chair of the Book Award Committee announcing the recognition. Honorable mention is an optional distinction, not a required one.
10. The Book Award Committee shall complete its deliberations by January 31st. No later than January 31st the Chair of the Book Award Committee shall notify the Executive Director and the current President of the Committee's selection. The Executive Director is responsible for securing a plaque, having it inscribed, and asking the Treasurer to draft a check to the winning author(s) in the amount of \$250. (Co-authors shall receive equal shares of the \$250 prize.) When two books share the Award, each co-winner receives the \$250 cash prize, to be shared equally among any co-authors.
11. The Chair of the Book Award Committee shall present the MSS Distinguished Book Award to the winner(s) during the awards ceremony at the annual meeting, preceded by a brief description of the work being recognized. If the Chair of the Book Award Committee is unable to attend the ceremony, another member of the Committee or the President-Elect (or other officer of the Society) shall present the Award instead.
12. In years when no nominated book meets the standards set by the Book Award Committee, the Chair of the Committee will inform the President and the Executive Director by January 31st that no book will be honored as the MSS Distinguished Book during this competition year.