

**EVERY TWELVE SECONDS:
INDUSTRIALIZED SLAUGHTER AND THE
POLITICS OF SIGHT (YALE AGRARIAN
STUDIES SERIES) BY TIMOTHY PACHIRAT**



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Review

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- "A lucid writer, Pachirat excels in explaining how a slaughterhouse works."--Ted Conover, The Nation
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- "Timothy Pachirat's courageous study of kill floor work exposes the fiction of 'humane' slaughter. This book is required reading for people who care about animals and for those interested in how distance and concealment operate in our society."--Gene Baur, President of Farm Sanctuary and author of Farm Sanctuary: Changing Hearts and Minds About Animals and Food
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This is an account of industrialized killing from a participant's point of view. The author, political scientist Timothy Pachirat, was employed undercover for five months in a Great Plains slaughterhouse where 2,500 cattle were killed per day—one every twelve seconds. Working in the cooler as a liver hanger, in the chutes as a cattle driver, and on the kill floor as a food-safety quality-control worker, Pachirat experienced firsthand the realities of the work of killing in modern society. He uses those experiences to explore not only the slaughter industry but also how, as a society, we facilitate violent labor and hide away that which is too repugnant to contemplate.

Through his vivid narrative and ethnographic approach, Pachirat brings to life massive, routine killing from the perspective of those who take part in it. He shows how surveillance and sequestration operate within the slaughterhouse and in its interactions with the community at large. He also considers how society is organized to distance and hide uncomfortable realities from view. With much to say about issues ranging from the sociology of violence and modern food production to animal rights and welfare, *Every Twelve Seconds* is an important and disturbing work.

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Features

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A very readable, insightful explanation of how industrialized slaughter really works

By 1541addison

It starts out a bit dry and technical, but stay with it-- this true account of one man's experience in a typical large-scale (~2500 per day) cattle slaughterhouse and "processing" facility is insightful on many levels. It gives a very detailed account of exactly how these operations work, but for me what was the most eye-opening insights were those related to how complex the conflicts of interest are, and how they in turn make it impossible for either the USDA or the slaughterhouse workers to adequately monitor the quality of the "product" and the way the animals are treated. In addition, he infused his perspective with compassion for the people who work there, in addition to compassion for the animals. The way the reality of what is happening there has to be concealed even from the people who work there (by designing the building with lots of concealing walls, turns, etc) underscores how much that ignorance is required in order for people to do their jobs. The mental "compartmentalizing" of what they are doing reminds me of the same coping technique used by people working in the Nazi concentration camps. People do things they would never normally do when they mentally compartmentalize it and remove their focus from the suffering of the person or animal in front of them. It made it even more clear to me that the market for animal products must vanish in order for this insidious factory farming machine to come to a stop. And this books helps the reader take the step of SEEING and KNOWING that is essential in order for pity, mercy and compassion to follow. May pity, mercy, and compassion truly follow for everyone who reads this book.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By Amazon Customer

Great read for all meat eaters

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Very important book

By Seldy Cramer

"Every Twelve Seconds" is a very important book. It is a well-written and gripping account of what exactly happens in a modern industrial slaughterhouse. It is absolutely horrifying - I really hope that word gets out about this great book. I also appreciate that it is not a long book and that it is so clearly written, with very helpful diagrams that I found myself constantly referring to.

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- "As a lawyer who has learned the food industry's hidden truths from whistleblowers and insiders, I commend Pachirat for sharing his philosophical and physical exploration of the obscured world of animal agriculture."--Amanda L. Hitt, Director, Food Integrity Campaign Government Accountability Project
- "[I]t would take an exceptionally visceral, in-depth account to make a meaningful contribution to the

literature of animals suffering for our nourishment. That's exactly what Timothy Pachirat provides in *Every Twelve Seconds*."--Tom Bartlett, *Chronicle of Higher Education*

- "From June to December 2004, Pachirat (politics, New Sch.) worked at a cattle slaughterhouse in Nebraska. During his tenure, he worked in three distinct areas: in the cooler as a liver hanger, on the killing floor herding cattle to the knocking box, and in quality control. Through these disparate positions, he gained a thorough understanding of the formal and informal rules that govern American slaughterhouses. His conclusions are grim--bureaucracy and ineptitude combine in a way that does not bode favorably for food safety. He argues that industrialized slaughter is a hidden world tolerable only because it is invisible to most. Repugnant tasks like the ones associated with processing cattle should be more transparent and would perhaps be duly transformed as a result. Complete with meticulous diagrams showing each worker's position in the slaughterhouse, descriptions of each worker's job duties, and an appendix detailing cattle body parts and their uses, this compelling documentary work illuminates in great detail the workings of an industrial slaughterhouse. VERDICT For anyone curious about the origin of beef in America or those interested in the politics of concealment."--Diana Hartle, *Univ. of Georgia Lib., Athens, Library Journal*
- "The fascination of *Every Twelve Seconds* lies in the meaty main chapters, which recount Pachirat's passage through the hiring process and then into the factory and abruptly out of it, five months later."--Ted Conover, *The Nation*
- "Pachirat thinks about the larger issues of killing in a satisfying, comprehensive way: how people in the plant handle it, and how he did."--Ted Conover, *The Nation*
- "This is a masterful expose, written in crystalline prose. In tying the cruelty and dehumanization of industrialized slaughter to the politics of sight, the book adds to a growing canon of recent work . . . by extending people's understanding of and exacerbating human repugnance to one of the great moral failings of current times. Summing Up: Highly recommended."--Choice
- "This book is important. Very important. [. . .] buy it, read it, and share it with anyone who thinks they're at peace with eating animals. After all, what Pachirat shows without telling, is that every time we eat animals we promote suffering that, should we confront it directly, we'd deem entirely unacceptable."--James McWilliams, *Eating Plants* blog
- "A firsthand account of various kinds of slaughterhouse work [in which] Timothy Pachirat did it all. . . . We can count ourselves lucky that *Every Twelve Seconds* is a very good book if not a flawless one. . . . It forces upon us an unacademic yet profound question: How can something be right, if it feels so horribly wrong?"--B. R. Myers, *The Atlantic*
- "The Jungle for the 21st century."--Portland Press Herald
- "Every Twelve Seconds is a bold, gut-wrenching, beautifully written book. I suspect it has already found its way onto a number of syllabi for courses in animal and food studies. Yet its appeal is broader... its substantive and theoretical focus on violence, power, and "dirty work" should make the book a welcome addition to a myriad of "mainstream" sociology and political science courses as well. Finally, by complementing the vivid ethnographic narrative with penetrating yet accessible critical theory, *Every Twelve Seconds* also holds out the promise of contributing to the public discussion about the morality of organised slaughter."--Colin Jerolmack, *Society & Animals*

"The book is superbly written, especially given the grimness of the subject."—Mark Bittman, *The New York Times*, Opinionator column "A firsthand account of various kinds of slaughterhouse work [in which] Timothy Pachirat did it all. . . . We can count ourselves lucky that *Every Twelve Seconds* is a very good book if not a flawless one. . . . It forces upon us an unacademic yet profound question: How can something

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"A fascinating, gut-wrenching study—but absolutely not for the weak of stomach."—Kirkus Reviews

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prose and tone are readable, horrific, and compelling. The documentary spell it casts recalls the steady, unflinching eye of Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier*. Astonishing."—John Bowe, author of *Nobodies: Slave Labor in Modern America and the Dark Side of the New Global Economy*

About the Author

Timothy Pachirat is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and author of *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (Yale University Press, 2011) and *Among Wolves: Ethnography and the Immersive Study of Power* (Routledge, 2017).

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