

Procedures and rules for *shock: social science fiction* by Joshua A.C. Newman, paraphrased and judged by me

I have specified two Protagonists for simplicity of play, for this session

MAKING THE GRID

One person names a Shock – there is only one; if two or more are proposed, then decide

- One person owns the Shock (doesn't have to be the creator); see constraint below

Each person names an Issue

- Each person owns an Issue (doesn't have to be the creator)

Two people write their names next to an Issue. They will play the Protagonists.

- They can choose different Issues or the same Issue
- You can't write your name for an Issue that you own
- Neither person may own the Shock, i.e., the Shock owner cannot play a Protagonist

MINUTIAE

The owner of the Shock states how it looks and works, and writes one or two index cards for relevant details

Each owner of an Issue states one or two details about it, perhaps including how it is affected by the Shock, and writes an index card to describe them

- If the Issue is not "occupied" by a Protagonist, it is still in the story and gets Minutiae, but takes on a background or supportive role to the Protagonist-specific Issues

PROTAGONISTS

Each Protagonist player makes up a person (broadly speaking), who experiences the intersection of the Shock and that specific Issue

- 3 Features, 2 Links, and a Story Goal (something to do, to get, or to become)
- Write "3" in the central box

PRAXIS

Through open discussion, create two pairs of internally opposed terms – these are how things get done in this setting, generally, i.e., not individual skill-sets. Please don't be deconstructive.

- Examples: Violence vs. Compassion, Buying vs. Taking, Owning vs. Sharing, Honesty vs. Lies, Safety vs. Risk, Authority vs. Rebellion, Logic vs. Passion

Write each pair at one side of the central box, in the two available sections

- Let's standardize where they are across both sheets to avoid confusion

In each little box (Fulcrum), write any number from 3 to 8

- There is no mathematical constraint, either may have any number in the allowed range
- Closer to 8 means you are better at the lower term; closer to 3 means you are better at the upper term

ANTAGONISTS

Two players volunteer to play Antagonists, one for each Protagonist (owned by some other player)

- Let's give the option to people without Protagonists first
- Both Protagonist players may not play each other's Antagonist in a "perfect pair"

Each Protagonist player provides the very basic concept for their Antagonist

- It may be an entity or organization which includes people, or a person who belongs to an organization or entity

The Antagonist player finishes the sheet

- Assign values from 3 to 8 to each Fulcrum
- Write a name and any other details, resources, abilities, allies, minions, gear, or anything you want in the Minutiae

SCENES

Protagonists trade scenes (this is specific to two-Protagonist games, like ours)

The Protagonist player sets the beginning moment of a scene, stating where they are and what they are doing at that moment.

- There is no discussion or negotiation about a scene before it is played.

The Antagonist player is effectively the GM for most features and events of the scene.

- They act primarily through the Antagonist's Minutiae, which they may introduce at will; they may also create new Minutiae at any time.
- They must recognize a conflict or impose one forcefully, sooner or later.

A conflict may not fully resolve a Story Goal in the Protagonist's first scene; after that, this may occur depending on what is happening.

The owners of the Shock and the Issues say how they actually work and manifest in the fiction, including associated minor characters.

- They participate by including Minutiae and may add Minutiae at any time.
- If a Protagonist or Antagonist wants to narrate something about a Shock or Issue, including any associated or implied characters, or to include another Protagonist or either Antagonist, consult the owner.

CONFLICTS

1. Each player states intentions/goals for their character
 - Cannot target another Protagonist unless they're in the scene too
 - The two goals must be orthogonal, i.e., they may both succeed or both fail
2. Each player chooses a single Fulcrum term based on what the character is doing
 - The top term seeks to roll higher than the Fulcrum value
 - The bottom term seeks to roll lower than the Fulcrum value
3. The Protagonist player gets a number of dice = their central number; the Antagonist player spends 3-6 Story Credits and gets that number of dice
 - In each case, one die must be d10; the others may be d10s or d4s
 - One must be d10; the others may be d10s or d4s
 - Each other player gets 1d4
4. Protagonist initial result: high d10 – Antagonist's high d4; the opposite applies to the Antagonist in exactly the same way
5. Check vs. Fulcrum to determine initial success
 - The Audience member with the highest-rolled d4 adds or subtracts its value to/from any of the four available values, possibly changing success or failure to its opposite
6. If a result lands on the Fulcrum value, then the Antagonist extends and extremifies the conflict; roll the d10s and d4s again and apply the next-highest Audience die

The Protagonist player narrates success and the Antagonist player narrates failure, unless the Audience die critically altered the result, in which case that Audience player narrates the success or failure.

Option: when your Protagonist fails, you may risk a Link to continue this Conflict. If you fail again, transform the Link and add a new Feature (increasing your central value). You may also transform the Link with a success if you want. You must replace a transformed Link.

ENDINGS

A Protagonist's Story Goal may become eligible for final resolution at any time after that Protagonist's first scene. It depends on events and aesthetics.

If an Antagonist has 5 Story Credits or less, then they must state conflicts which conceivably resolve the Story Goal.