



MLA-LT / CU 328-01 INVESTIGATING THE MAFIA IN LITERATURE, CINEMA AND THE MEDIA

IES Abroad Milan

DESCRIPTION:

The Mafia and the Italian State originated in the same period, the end of the 19th century, and from then on their histories have always been closely related. From Sicily, the “octopus” (piovra), as the Mafia is called in Italy, has spread throughout Italy, and has pervaded almost every facet of Italian life, including cultural life. It has exerted an enormous appeal on literature, cinema and the media in general. This course presents a selection of the long-standing tradition of fiction and non-fiction texts that scrutinizes the Mafia from distinct intellectual and creative angles of vision. The selection of novels, films, testimonies and TV series will offer different representations of the Mafia: its ethics; its relation with politics, religion and business; its ideas of friendship, family, masculinity and femininity. It will challenge some of the clichés around the Mafia and will offer interesting insights on the Italian cultural identity. A section will be dedicated to the Mafia in Milano.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None. No previous Italian literature background is necessary. More advanced students, such as Italian Language Majors, will receive assignments personally tailored to their level and interests.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

The course will alternate lectures from the instructor, class discussions, readings, screenings of films and student presentations. Great emphasis will be given to the active participation of the student.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course Participation – 25% (Quizzes 15%)
- Midterm Exam – 25%
- Final Exam – 25%
- Assignments – 25%

Course Participation

Students are expected to give presentations to the class on the assigned weekly readings to show their ability to communicate what they have read and elaborate upon it. 15% of the participation grade will come from 5 quizzes delivered during the semester.

Midterm Exam

Organized as a series of brief questions to evaluate the students’ reading and comprehension ability, and one essay question to evaluate students’ critical thinking ability

Final Exam

Organized as a short guided paper to evaluate the students’ capacity to elaborate the material examined during the semester and their critical thinking ability.

Assignments

Each student will be asked to complete two assignments based on the information collected in the readings and screenings presented in class, and from their personal research. These assignments could include an annotated bibliography, research conducted in local libraries, or close readings of significant works. The assignments will allow students to show their competence in organizing and interpreting the information they collect from both during the course, and from outside resources (libraries, scholarly papers and newspaper articles, etc.). Students will also design a geographical, historical, and cultural map of the Mafia phenomenon in Italy.



LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Be familiarized with a number of important works of Italian literature and cinema
- Critically analyze Italian literature according to their textual typologies
- Synthesize historical, cultural, and literary backgrounds by gathering information from lectures, readings, and personal research
- Organize gained knowledge in a critical way through an original paper and an oral presentation to the class

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are expected to be responsible for their own class attendance and to give academic responsibilities priority over other activities. Regular class attendance is mandatory. For physical and mental health reasons, IES Abroad Milano allows a maximum of TWO (2) absences in each Area Studies course. Every absence beyond this allowance will automatically result in a penalty of 2 percentage points off the final grade. SEVEN (7) absences will result in a failing grade in Italian language and Area Studies courses. FOUR (4) absences will result in a failing grade in Seminar courses. Failure to attend a scheduled exam, test, quiz, or presentation will automatically result in an F grade on that assessment.

TRIGGER WARNING:

Students will be exposed to masterpieces that sometimes explore sensitive issues such as violence, abuse, nudity and racism. Critical thinking is required to watch, analyze and discuss these films and is fundamental to the learning experience. While I will try to advise students in advance when content may be potentially upsetting, I cannot anticipate all student needs. Students experiencing difficulty with the content should inform the instructor.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
<i>Session 1</i>	Introduction to the Course	
<i>Session 2</i>	The Origins of the Mafia, the Myth • The historical origins of the Palermo Mafia	• <i>The Leopard</i>, ch. 1 (p. 1-34)
<i>Session 3</i>	Old Men vs New Men, Old Women vs New Women • Discussion of the first chapters of <i>The Leopard</i> and their relevance to the origins of the Mafia	• <i>The Leopard</i>, ch. 2-3 (p. 35-101)
<i>Session 4</i>	North vs South. Men of Honor • Lecture on the relationship between Mafia and politics	• <i>The Leopard</i>, ch. 4 (p. 102-143)
<i>Session 5</i>	The Ball • Discussion of the end of the film <i>The Leopard</i> and its relevance to the development of the Mafia	• <i>The Leopard</i>, ch. 5-6 (p. 144-182) • <i>The Leopard</i>, film, last scenes
<i>Session 6</i>	The Mafia Goes to America • Lecture on the transplantation of the Palermo	• John Dickie, <i>Cosa Nostra</i> (pg. 92-106, coursepack)

	Mafia to New York and the USA	• <i>The Godfather</i>, analysis of first sequences • Quiz 1
Session 7	Mafia and WW2 • Discussion of Varese's article about the Mafia in America. • Discussion of some key sequences of <i>The Godfather</i>	• <i>The Godfather</i> • Federico Varese, <i>Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime Conquers New Territories</i> (Princeton University Press, 2013), course pack (p. 101-145)
Session 8	The Godfather, the Ending • Discussion of the last sequence of <i>The Godfather</i> • Lecture on the Mafia during Fascism and WW2	• <i>The Godfather</i>, last sequences • Quiz 2
Session 9	Mafia and the State • Introduction to Sciascia's <i>The Day of the Owl</i>, and discussion of first pages	• <i>The Day of the Owl</i>, first half (p.1-130)
Session 10	The Last, Bloody Years of Cosa Nostra • Lecture on the last years of the Palermo Mafia (1970-1992) – and discussion of the ending of <i>The Day of the Owl</i>	• <i>The Day of the Owl</i>, finish (p. 131-273)
Session 11	Review Session	• General Review • Quiz 3
Session 12	MIDTERM	
Session 13	First Assignment Midterm Course Assessment • Comment on the Midterm • Introduction to the documentary <i>In un altro paese</i> on Falcone and Borsellino	• Based on the documentary, <i>In un altro paese</i>
Session 14	The Mafia in Milan • Lecture on the Mafia in Milan	• Gomorrah, the TV Series, Episode 5
Session 15	The New Geography of the Mafia • Introduction to Saviano's book, <i>Gomorrah</i> • Close reading of first paragraphs	• Roberto Saviano, <i>Gomorrah</i>, "The Port" (p. 1-21)
Session 16	The Mafia and Fashion Business • Lecture on the Camorra • Discussion of first chapters of <i>Gomorrah</i>	• Roberto Saviano, "Angiolina Jolie" and "The System" (p. 22-64)

Session 17	Women in, against and around the Mafia Discussion of the role of women both in the Palermo Mafia and in the Camorra	- Gomorra "Women" (p. 132-145), Testimonies (course pack, p. 1-23) - Quiz 4
Session 18	Women in the Camorra Discussion of Episode 7 of Gomorra the TV series: A woman boss	<i>Gomorra</i>, the TV Series, Episode 7
Session 19	The Mafia and Children Close reading of the chapter "The Secondigliano War," with emphasis on the role of children in the Camorra	<i>Gomorra</i>, "The Secondigliano War" (p. 65-131) <i>Gomorra</i>, the film
Session 20	The 'Ndrangheta Lecture on the 'Ndrangheta, the mafia in Calabria; discussion on Perry's article on the role of women in the 'Ndrangheta	- Alex Perry, "Blood and Justice" (course pack, p. 36-47) - Quiz 5
Session 21	Student Presentations Assignment 2	Annotated Bibliography
Session 22	General Review and Conclusions	

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard* (Pantheon, 2007)
- Leonardo Sciascia, *The Day of the Owl* (NYRB Classics, 2003)
- Niccolò Ammaniti, *I'm Not Scared* (Anchor, 2004)
- Roberto Saviano, *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System* (Picador, 2008)
- Course-pack

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Alexander Stille, *Excellent Cadavers: The Mafia and the Death of the First Italian Republic* (Vintage, 1996)
- John Dickie, *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
- Paul Ginsborg, *Italy and Its Discontents: Family, Civic Society, State* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)
- Robin Pickering-lazzi, *Mafia and Outlaw Stories from Italian Life and Literature* (University of Toronto Press, 2007)
- Salvatore Lupo, *History of the Mafia* (Columbia University Press, 2011)
- Barbara Pezzotti, *The Importance of Place in Contemporary Italian Crime Fiction: A Bloody Journey* (The Fairleigh Dickinson University Press)
- Dana Renga, *Mafia Movies: A Reader* (University of Toronto Press, 2013)
- Andrea Meccia, *MediaMafia* (Di Girolamo, 2014)
- Cirino Cristaldi, *La mafia e i suoi stereotipi televisivi* (Bonferraro Editore, 2016)
- Federico Varese, *Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime Conquers New Territories* (Princeton University Press, 2013)
- John Hooper, "The Real Specter," *1843 Magazine*, January 2017
- Federico Varese, *Mafia Life: Love, Death and Money at the Heart of Organized Crime* (Oxford University Press, 2018)
- Alex Perry, "Blood and Justice," (The Women Who Took On the Mafia), *The New Yorker*, January 22, 2018, pp. 36-47

- Emiliano Morreale, La mafia immaginaria (Donzelli, 2020)

FILMOGRAPHY:

- Luchino Visconti, Il gattopardo (1963)
- Francis Ford Coppola, The Godfather (1972)
- Damiano Damiani, The Day of the Owl (1968)
- Gabriele Salvatores, Io non ho paura (2003)
- Matteo Garrone, Gomorra (2008)
- Marco Turco, In un altro paese (2005), documentary
- Gomorrah, Sky Atlantic series (2014)

RECOMMENDED FILMS AND TV SERIES:

- Francesco Rosi, Salvatore Giuliano (1962)
- Francesco Rosi, Le mani sulla città (1963)
- Elio Petri, We Still Kill the Old Way (1967)
- Michele Placido, Un eroe borghese (1995)
- Marco Tullio Giordana, I cento passi (2000)
- The Sopranos, La piovra, Montalbano (tv series)
- Pif, La mafia uccide solo d'estate (2013)
- Pif, In guerra per amore (2016)
- Marco Bellocchio, Il traditore (2019)
- The Sopranos, HBO series (2009)