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# A Mafia Story: Its Representation in Literature, Cinema and Television

PROF. MARIA SEPA

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| <b>Area of study:</b>         | Italian Culture: Literature, Theatre, Cinema, Music, Philosophy and History |
| <b>Area Code:</b>             | SO/LT300  |
| <b>Method of Instruction:</b> | In-person   |

## Description

From its local origins in Sicily, the Mafia has become a global phenomenon and a widespread model of organized crime that threatens and corrupts the international economy, political systems and social environments. Yet film, television and literature have shown a continued fascination of the Mafia which has often been portrayed with romantic and even heroic connotations. In this course we will explore the representations of the Mafia in Italy through literature, film, and television; in the 20th and 21st centuries. Combining the analyses of historians, sociologists, and intellectuals, along with the testimonies of victims, we will challenge the stereotypes through which cultural productions envision the Mafia, and more importantly, we will explore how the Mafia envisions the world, in particular what is its ethics, its relationships with law, politics, business and finance, its ideas of femininity and masculinity, its portrayals of children. Examining both the visions on and by the Mafia through cultural, socio-political, and historical perspectives, this course aims to deconstruct the mythological eye and instead form an analytical eye with which to investigate and better understand the Mafioso universe and power, and the cultural Italian identity as well.

## Course contents

In the course we will investigate the following topics:

- 1.The origins/the myth (The Leopard film and book,The Godfather film)
- 2.Mafia and politics (The Day of the Owl, book and film, In un altro paese, docu)
- 3.Women in, against and around the Mafia (testimonies,)
- 4.Mafia and the children (I'm Not Scared, film and book)
- 5.Mafia and business (Gomorra, film,book, TV Series, Episodes 5 and 7)
- 6.Mafia in tv series (The Sopranos)

## Prerequisites

None

## Method of instruction

The course will alternate lectures, class discussions, students' presentations. Great emphasis will be given to the active participation of the student.

## Course requirements



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Each student will be asked to do two assignments in response to the readings and the screenings that will be discussed in class. There will be a midterm, and a final exam. Attendance is mandatory, as well as the punctual reading of the material assigned weekly.

## Credits

6 ECTS

## Grading

|                                    |                    |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Attendance and class participation | 25% of final grade |
| Assignments                        | 25% of final grade |
| Midterm test                       | 25% of final grade |
| Final exam                         | 25% of final grade |

## Course readings and materials

### Novels:

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

### Films:

1. Luchino Visconti, *Il gattopardo* (1963)
2. Francis Ford Coppola, *The Godfather* (1972)
3. Gabriele Salvatores, *Io non ho paura* (2003)
4. Matteo Garrone, *Gomorra* (2008)

### Documentaries and TV Series:

- The Sopranos, Season 1, Episode 1  
Gomorra, Season 1, Episode 5, 7  
Marco Turco, Alexander Stille, *In un altro paese* (docu, 2005)

Extra readings and the lectures slides will be available on Blackboard.

## Instructor bio

**Prof. Maria Sepa** Ph.D. Italian Literature, Brown University (Providence, RI); has taught Italian Literature at University of Virginia, Wellesley College, Brown University, Brown University in Bologna, and is currently teaching at IES Milan. She is also translating from English into Italian for the cultural pages of *Il Corriere della Sera*. She is engaged in promoting a dialogue between American and Italian studies, through two blogs, [www. http://usalibri.blogspot.it/](http://usalibri.blogspot.it/), and <http://italiannewsclicks.blogs.emmanuel.edu/>. She is the author of *Milano downtown*, a novel (Manni, 2013).

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