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

PROF. MARIA SEPA

## Overview

**Area:** Cultural Studies

**Dates:** 26 June – 7 July (2 weeks)

**Campus:** Milan

**Course Number:** SO/LT 300su

**Term:** Summer 2023

**Credits:** 6 ECTS

## Course 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 excerpts from book, The Godfather film)
2. Mafia and politics (The Day of the Owl, book, In un altro paese, docu)
3. Women in, against and around the Mafia (testimonies, Gomorrah, TV Series, Ep. 7)
4. Mafia and the children (I'm Not Scared, film, Gomorrah, film and book)
5. Mafia and business (Gomorrah, film and book)
6. Mafia in Milano (Gomorrah, TV Series, Ep. 5)
7. The Other Italian Mafias

## Prerequisites

None



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## Method of teaching

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

## Course requirements

Each student will be asked to give short presentations of the material assigned daily. On the last day of class, they will have to give a presentation based on their work. On the last day of class, there will be the Final Exam. Attendance is mandatory, as well as the punctual reading of the material assigned daily.

## Grading

Presentations	50 % of final grade
Final written exam	50 % of final grade

## Course readings and materials

### Novels:

- Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard* (Pantheon, 2007, excerpts)
- Leonardo Sciascia, *The Day of the Owl* (NYRB Classics, 2003)
- Roberto Saviano, *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System* (Picador, 2008, excerpts)

### Films:

- Luchino Visconti, *Il gattopardo* (1963)
- Francis Ford Coppola, *The Godfather* (1972)
- Gabriele Salvatores, *Io non ho paura* (2003)
- Marco Turco, Alexander Stille, *In un altro paese* (2005)
- Matteo Garrone, *Gomorra* (2008)

### TV Series:

- *The Sopranos*, Episode 1
- *Gomorra*, Episode 5, 7

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

## Schedule

Lesson 1: Introduction to the course. The origins/the myth: The Leopard

Lesson 2: Discussion on The Leopard, book and film. The Mafia at the turn of the century

Lesson 3: The Mafia goes to America. The Godfather

Lesson 4: The Mafia and Politics. The Day of the Owl, In un altro paese, docu.

Lesson 5: The Mafia in Milan. Field Study and 5th episode of Gomorra, tv series

Lesson 6: Mafia and Business, Gomorra

Lesson 7: Women in/around/ against the Mafia. Women's Testimonies, 7th episode of Gomorra, tv series.

Lesson 8: The Other Italian Mafias: Camorra and 'Ndrangheta

Lesson 9: Mafia and children, Io non ho paura. Field study to Cascina Cuccagna: Conclusions and students' presentation

Lesson 10: Review and Final Exam



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## Rules of conduct

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Please consider that Field Trips are considered equal to regular classes and indeed you are expected to attend the visits. Unexcused absences will not be accepted. An excused absence will only be granted if you are seriously ill and can support your claim with a local doctor's certificate dated the day you missed class (therefore you must go to the doctor that same day) that has to be delivered to the Professor or to UCSC International Office. Any other absence will not be excused and will result in not being admitted to the final exam, which corresponds to a 0 (zero) in the final exam.

**Exam Date:** The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Should the dates of the final exams be moved for force major reasons, UCSC International Office and the Professor will promptly inform you in class and/or via e-mail on the new date agreed. Unexcused absences to the exams will result in a failing grade in the course. In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, you must submit a medical certificate and communicate your absence to the Professor and UCSC International Office via email prior to the exam. If the student does not justify his/her absence through sufficient documentation and with adequate notice before the final test, you will receive an automatic Failed. Absences for other unforeseeable circumstances will not be accepted and will result in a failing grade.

## Bio of instructor

**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 <https://italiannewsclinks.fas.harvard.edu/>. She is the author of *Milano downtown*, a novel (Manni, 2013).

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