



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

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

PROF. MARIA SEPA
TERM: SUMMER 2025

Area of study	Cultural Studies
Course code	SO/LT 300su
Method of instruction	In person
Participation	Mandatory

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 (In un altro paese, docu)
3. The Camorra (Gomorra, book and film)
4. Women in, against and around the Mafia (Women's Testimonies, Gomorra, "Women", Gomorra TV Series, Ep. 7)
5. Mafia and business, the 'Ndrangheta (Gomorra, film and book)
6. The Mafia in Milan (Gomorra, TV Series, Ep. 5)

Method of teaching

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



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Course requirements

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

Credits

6 ECTS

Grading

Class participation, exercises, presentations	60 % of final grade
Final exam	40 % of final grade.

Course readings and materials

Novels:

1. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard* (Pantheon, 2007, excerpts)
2. Leonardo Sciascia, *The Day of the Owl* (NYRB Classics, 2003)
3. Women Testimonies

Films:

1. Luchino Visconti, *Il gattopardo* (1963)
2. Francis Ford Coppola, *The Godfather* (1972)
3. Marco Turco, Alexander Stille, *In un altro paese* (2005)
4. Matteo Garrone, *Gomorra* (2008)

TV Series:

1. *Gomorrah*, Episode 5, 7

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

Instructor bio

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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Course Schedule

Lesson	Date	Topic	Reading/Course Material
1	June 23, 1:30-4:30 pm	Introduction to the course and to <i>The Leopard</i>	Lecture on the origins of the Palermo Mafia
2	June 24, 9:30 am -15:30 pm	The Leopard, first chapters, Mafia and politics	The Leopard, Ch. 1-2 and film
3	June 25, 9:30 am -16:30 pm	The Leopard, conclusions. The Mafia in the USA	The Leopard, film, The Godfather
4	June 26, 9:00 am -16:30 pm	The Mafia Goes to America, The Godfather The Mafia in Milan	The Godfather, film/Field Study
5	June 27	NO CLASS	
6	June 30, 9:30 am -15:30 pm	The Last, Bloodiest Years of the Palermo Mafia	In un altro paese, documentary/Sciascia, The Day of the Owl
7	July 1, 9:30 am -15:30 pm	The Camorra	Gomorra, Ch.1-2 Gomorra, the TV Series
8	July 2, 9:30 am -15:30 pm	The Camorra and their businesses	Gomorra, Ch. 3 Gomorra, the film
9	July 3, 9:30 am -16:30 pm	Women in/around/against the Mafias The 'Ndrangheta	Gomorra, Ch. 5./ Field Study
10	July 4, 9:30-12:30 am	Students Presentations and Final Exam	