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

PROF. MARIA SEPA

OVERVIEW

Area: Cultural Studies

Dates: 26 June - 6 July (2 weeks)

Campus: Milan

Course Number: SO/LT 300

Term: Summer School 2018

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)



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2. Mafia and politics (The Day of the Owl, book, In un altro paese, docu, La mafia uccide solo d'estate, film)
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)

PREREQUISITES

None

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

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|--------------------|---------------------|
| 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, excerpta)
- Leonardo Sciascia, *The Day of the Owl* (NYRB Classics, 2003)
- Roberto Saviano, *Gomorrah: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System* (Picador, 2008, excerpts)



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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)
- Pif, *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* (2013)

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, La mafia uccide solo d'estate, film.

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

Lesson 9: Review and Final Exam

RULES OF CONDUCT



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Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Unexcused absences will prevent students from being admitted to the final exam. In case of health issues, students will need to inform both UCSC International Office (at international.advisor@unicatt.it) and the professor and provide a medical certificate.

Exam Date: The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, the student must submit a medical certificate and communicate his/her 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, the student will receive an automatic Failed.

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 <http://italiannewsclicks.blogs.emmanuel.edu/>. She is the author of *Milano downtown*, a novel (Manni, 2013).

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