



Fall 2019 – The Politics of Organized Crime

SOC-UA 9506

W 3:00 PM-5:45 PM

Room: Giardino

Class Description:

What most people know about Italian criminal organizations comes from stereotypical representations in popular culture – films and literature. The analysis of real-world data, such as investigations, proceedings and crime statistics, dismisses many of the accepted myths about Italian mafias over the last decades. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the definitions of this complex phenomenon by demystifying criminal underworld. This course will examine the organization of mafia groups in Italy, their codes and symbols, their activities both in legal and illegal markets, and their relationship to politics and other social institutions. The Italian case will be compared with those countries where similar groups operate. Comparisons will enable students to disentangle different types of organized crime and to discover patterns and mechanisms of emergence and persistence across countries. The course will include also a review of the policies designed to control organized crime and of the grassroots initiatives to reduce the risk and combat mafia infiltration into local economy and society.

Instructor Details:

Name: Salvatore Sberna

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Office Hours: By appointment only, Wednesdays, 2pm-3pm

Villa Ulivi Office Location: Villa Ulivi, Instructors' Floor

Villa Ulivi Phone Number: +39 055 5007 300

Desired Outcomes:

On completion of this course, students should:

- Have mastered a basic understanding of organized crime, its origins, growth and persistence;
- Have improved their understanding of how to research questions on crime, and their ability to compare criminal organizations across countries;
- Have improved their ability to think critically about the impact of mafia groups to democracy, society and development;

- Have gained experience with policies and best practices designed to prevent and control organized crime.

Assessment Components

- Attendance and Participation: 25%
- Weekly Assignments and oral presentation (10 minute length): 10%
- Midterm Exam: In-class exam 10% and Take-home essay (1,000-words) 15%
- Final In-class exam: 10%
- Final Project (max 3,000-words): 30%, including Topic Proposal (5%), Sources and Methods (5%) and Final Paper (20%)

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class

(1) Required Readings, participation, weekly assignments and presentations

A significant amount of reading is required for the course. Students who fall behind will have a difficult time catching up. Therefore, they are expected to do the assigned reading in advance of the class. The class will presume knowledge of the readings assigned for that week.

All students should be able to answer the Review Questions found in each class outlines provided by the instructor as a way to ensure familiarity with the materials. In some cases, self-assessment tests might be administered after the lecture to measure and ensure comprehension of readings and lectures. These tests will not be graded;

Once in the semester, students are expected either to present briefly a case study related to the topic assigned for that week or to play the role of discussion leader during group exercises/simulation. **Presenters** will sign up with the instructor during the first three weeks of the semester

In the weekly outlines you will find the assignment for each session.

(2) Mafia News Report & Blog Postings

Every week students are expected to keep up with **news on criminal organizations** that are reported in newspapers and on-line sources. Students are required **to enter onto class website (<http://wp.nyu.edu/mafیاتoday>)** at least **5 POSTS** describing and commenting **real-word events related to organized crime** that occurred in the week before the post is published (**at least 2 POSTS** must be edited **before the Spring Break week**). Students must use reliable sources, by following the instructions and tips available on the website (here the [link](#)).

Moreover, **students volunteering for in-class presentations** are required to select **the most relevant news** of the week previous to the session and report in class (**3 news min.**).

(3) Site Visit and Field Trip: 3 Field Research Sessions

Site visit and field trip are **mandatory** (see section Class Attendance for more details). Three Field Research Sessions will be organized: **Anticamorra Field Trip** (October 11-12, 2019); (2) Prato's field research session (Nov. 20 2019); (3) Mafia and Antimafia in Florence (**TBC**, Dec. 4 2019).

In order to get prepared for the field trip, some projects might be discussed in class focusing on issues related to mafia and antimafia in Naples.

(4) Final Project

Being able to present your thoughts in writing is an ability that will be essential in your future career. Each student will be required to submit a **7 to 10 page paper** that explores your view of an issue affecting any given organized crime group or related to the governance of illegal transactions. Both the format and the topic will be chosen by the students according to their interests and program of studies.

Part of the goal of this assignment is for you to actually conduct a real research/project on a topic related to organized crime. Second, this final project gives you the opportunity to make connections between the course contents and your personal interests and areas of studies. You need to define and choose a single and limited topic or puzzle, explaining why this is either relevant, innovative or challenging for the studies of organized crime. You are expected to gather and collect real data about one or more case studies. Data collection might also include interviews with privileged actors, survey, fieldwork observation. You are expected to use outside sources of material for your project, therefore the textbook or supplemental materials assigned in class cannot be extensively used on your project. A sample of topics and ideas will be discussed in class during the semester, and a list of the best projects of the past semesters is available on the class website. **Each student is expected to briefly present her research topic on the class website (<http://wp.nyu.edu/mafiaatoday>) publishing a post about it due Dec. 4 2019 (to be also submitted through NYU Classes)**

Students may utilize text books and reference material aside from the course text as well as electronic resources on BobCat. Again, all research data, either from electronic sources, books, journals or periodicals must be properly attributed and cited. Research papers are not historical recitations but are papers whereby you state your position and then support your position by citing scholarly research and presenting the information and data you have collected.

The final project must be **submitted online through NYU Classes** before **Dec. 11 2019 by 11:00 PM**.

Assessment Expectations:

- **Grade A:** The student's work demonstrates an understanding of the subject that goes beyond assigned course readings. The student writes essays/exam questions that are an original synthesis of source materials, demonstrating the ability to evaluate source material critically. Written arguments are clear, well-organized and well-presented; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student has distinguished

himself/herself throughout the course of the semester for his/her contributions to class discussion.

- **Grade B:** The student's work shows a clear understanding of assigned readings and materials covered in class. The student writes clear, well-organized and well-presented essays/exam questions; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student is prepared in class and asks relevant questions.
- **Grade C:** The student's work shows a basic understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. However, written and/or oral work is deficient in one or more of the following areas: clarity, organization or content. The student's work is generally in need of improvement
- **Grade D:** The student's work shows occasional understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work is deficient in one or more of the following areas: clarity, organization or content. The student does not participate in class discussion and has not frequented the instructor's office hours.
- **Grade F:** The student's work does not demonstrate understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work are either insufficient or are not submitted. The student appears unprepared in class and has not frequented the instructor's office hours.

Grading Guidelines

A = 94-100

A minus = 90-93

B plus = 87-89

B = 84-86

B minus = 80-83

C plus = 77-79

C = 74-76

C minus = 70-73

D plus = 67-69

D = 65-66

F = below 65

Grading Policy:

Please refer to the Mafia Today website for further information about grading policy (<https://wp.nyu.edu/mafiatoday/course-requirements/>)

Academic Accommodations:

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see the [Moses Center](#) for further information.

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see [Study Away and Disability](#).

Attendance Policy: [Please use this standard text]

Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. **To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade.** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to the number of class times over a single week

Excused Absences:

In case of absence, regardless of the reason, the student is responsible for completing missed assignments, getting notes and making up missed work in a timely manner based upon a schedule that is mutually agreed upon between the faculty member and the student. **The only excused absences are those approved by the Office of Academic Support; they are as follows:**

Absence Due to Illness

- If you are sick, please see a doctor. Contact the Office of Student Life for assistance.
- For absences that last for **two or more consecutive days**, a **doctor's certificate**, "**certificato medico**" is required. The doctor will indicate in writing the number of days of bed rest required. Please note **these certificates can only be obtained on the day you see the doctor** and cannot be written for you afterwards.
- Absences can ONLY be excused if they are reported WITHIN 48 HRS of your return to class via the online [NYU Florence Absence Form](#)
- OAS will not accept a student email or telephone call regarding an absence due to illness
- OAS will only notify faculty of absences REPORTED on the ABSENCE FORM

- The Office of Student Life, when assisting you in cases of severe or extended illness, will coordinate with the Office of Academic Support to properly record your absences

Due to Religious Observance

- Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday
- Information regarding absences due to religious observance must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online [NYU Florence Absence Form](#)
- Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

Due to a class conflict with a program sponsored lecture, event, or activity

- All students are entitled to miss one class period without any penalty to their grade in order to attend a lecture, event or activity that is sponsored by the academic program
- Information regarding absences due to a class conflict must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online [NYU Florence Absence Form](#)
- Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

Students with questions or needing clarification about this policy are instructed to contact a member of the Office of Academic Support located in Villa Ulivi or to email florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu

Late Submission of Work

- All course work must be submitted on time, in class on the date specified on the syllabus.
- To request an extension on a deadline for an assignment, students must speak to the professor one week prior to the due date
- To receive an incomplete for a course at the end of the semester, two weeks before final exams, both the student and the faculty member must meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs to review the request and if granted, they must both sign an Incomplete Contract detailing the terms for completing missing coursework.

Plagiarism Policy

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY FORM:

The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

In the event of suspected or confirmed cases of plagiarism, the faculty member will consult first with the Assistant Director for Academic Affairs as definitions and procedures vary

from school to school.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center, located in Villa Ulivi, offers you feedback on any type of writing, at any stage in planning or drafting; very rough drafts are welcome. Sign up for a consultation at the [Writing Center's website](#) and submit your working draft or ideas at least six hours in advance to [NYU Florence Writing Center](#). You can drop in for a consultation M-Th, but remember that appointments are given priority. Please also note that the Writing Center does not correct or "fix" your writing but prompts you to think and work. The aim is to create stronger writers in the long term, not necessarily perfect papers in the short term.

Required Text(s):

One way of keeping the cost of your course materials down and to keep the course more current, is to use reading materials from different sources to help increase our awareness in the course. I have selected articles from periodicals or other publications, which will be available on NYU Classes for this course. Students are expected to read the assigned materials prior to the class session (again please refer to the provisional course schedule below).

Class readings might be subject to change. Specific reading assignments for each class might be announced in the previous class and posted in the Readings section of NYU Classes.

Internet Research Guidelines:

The careful use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites will be given. Failure to cite internet and other non-traditional media sources in your written work constitutes plagiarism.

Class Assignments and Topics:

Session 1 - Wednesday, September 4

Introduction and Overview

Session 2- Wednesday, September 11

Organized and Disorganized Crime. What is and not a mafia group.

Objectives:

- Define and identify the attributes of organized crime
- Understand historical perspectives of organized crime
- Identify the various classifications of organized crime

- Distinguish organized crime from other forms of criminality

Assignment S_2: See Outline S_2 for instructions (NYU Classes)

Readings:

- VARESE, F. (2010) What is Organized Crime? Introduction to F.V. (ed.), *Organized Crime* (series: Critical Concepts in Criminology), 4 vols. Routledge, pp. 1-35.
- GAMBETTA, D. (1993), *The Sicilian...*, Chapter 1 (**ONLY** selected pages);
- VARESE, F. (2013) *Protection and Extortion*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime* (ed L Paoli), Oxford UP (**ONLY** pp. 1 & 2)
- **Selected-Cases Box**. See MafiaToday Website

Suggested readings

Take a look at the appendix of this report delivered by the United Nations for an overview of forty organized criminal groups operating in sixteen countries

- UNOCD (2012), *Results of a pilot survey of forty selected organized criminal groups in sixteen countries*, pp. 83-121

Session 3- Wednesday, September 18

The origins of organized crime.

Objectives:

- Identify the conditions leading to the emergence of organized crime
- Identity different historical paths to the consolidation of organized crime
- Understand the impact of organized crime to democratization
- Understand how economic and political changes can affect organized crime

Assignment S_3: *Is Sicily the future of #anywhere?* See Outline S_3 for instructions (NYU Classes)

Readings:

- SKAPERDAS, S. (2001), "The Political Economy of Organized Crime: Providing Protection When the State Does Not", in *Economics of Governance*, (2), pp. 173-202
- VARESE, F. (1994), *Is Sicily the future of Russia? Private protection and the rise of the Russian Mafia*, *Arb. europ. social.*, XXXV (**ONLY** 224-231)
- VARESE, F. (2013) *Protection and Extortion*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime* (ed L Paoli), Oxford UP (**ONLY** pp- 3-5)

Case studies: *Gangs in Prison*

- WOOD, G. (2014) *How Gangs Took Over Prisons*. *The Atlantic* , Vol. 314 Issue 3, p46-53, 8p
- COHEN A., *The Ambiguities of Prison Gangs. Guards aren't all heroes, and inmates aren't all villains*, *The Atlantic* , Oct. 2, 2014
<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/10/gangs-and-prisons/381034/>

Session 4 - Wednesday, September 25

Organizing Crime. Organization and mafia-like groups.

Objectives:

- Understand the varieties of organizational arrangements in mafias
- Identify different historical paths of development in mafias' organization
- Understand the role of rituals and symbolic rules in mafias
- Understand the trade-off between hierarchical vs anarchic organizations of crime

Assignment S_4: See Outline S_4 for instructions (NYU Classes)

Readings:

- CATINO, M. (2014). How Do Mafias Organize? *European Journal of Sociology*, 55, pp 177-198.
- CATINO, M. (2015). "Mafia rules. The role of criminal codes in mafia organizations," *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 31, **ONLY** pp. 541-543
- VAN DE BUNT, SIEGEL, AND ZAITCH (2014), *The Social Embeddedness of Organized Crime*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime* (ed L Paoli), Oxford UP

Case studies – In-class Presentations:

- *Woman and Mafia:* ALEX P., *The Women Who Took on the Mafia*, *The New Yorker*, January 22, 2018 Issue
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/22/the-women-who-took-on-the-mafia>

In-class Policy Debate: “**The Mafia Kids Policy: what the impact?**”, see materials on NYU Classes/MafiaToday

Session 5- Wednesday, October 2

The Economy of Crime I. Illicit drugs and organized crime

Objectives:

- Understand the systemic differences in the functioning of markets that operate illegally
- Identify the major illegal markets around the world
- Understand how the business of illicit drugs is organized in Italy and abroad
- Critically assess the impact of policy changes (i.e. legalization of drugs) upon illegal markets and organized crime

Assignment S_5: Field Research Session Background Report (I). See instruction on NYU Classes

Readings:

- SBERNA, S. (2014), *Notes on illegal markets*, mimeo (attached to Outline);
- REUTER, P. (2014). *Drug Markets and Organized Crime*. In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. : Oxford University Press.
- KLEEMANS E. and SMIT M. (2014), *Human Smuggling, Human Trafficking, and Exploitation in the Sex Industry*, In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Oxford University Press.
- *Documentary: The Nigerian Connection*, Al Jazeera (2013), available o MafiaToday (link and GoogleDrive), **only PART I is required**
- SAVIANO, R. (2005), *Gomorra*, Pan Macmillan, pp. 60-95

Case studies – In-class Presentations:

- *Policy Debate: “The Impact of Legalization of Drugs upon OC”*, see materials on NYU Classes/MafiaToday;

Session 6 - Wednesday, October 9

The Economy of Crime II. Human Trafficking, racket and organized crime

Objectives:

- Understand how the protection-racket is organized in Italy and abroad
- Understand how the business of human trafficking is organized in Italy and abroad
- Critically assess the impact of policy changes (i.e. militarization of borders) upon illegal markets and organized crime

Assignment S_6: Field Research Session Background Report II. See instruction on NYU Classes

Readings:

- *Miscellaneous* available on NYU Classes
- KLEEMANS E. and SMIT M. (2014), *Human Smuggling, Human Trafficking, and Exploitation in the Sex Industry*, In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Oxford University Press.
- *Documentary: The Nigerian Connection*, Al Jazeera (2013), available on MafiaToday (link and GoogleDrive), **only PART I is required**

Case studies – In-class Presentations:

- *Policy Debate: “Mexico-US Wall: the impact on trafficking?”*, see materials on NYU Classes/MafiaToday;

Anticamorra Field Trip Preparation Session

Sessions 7-8 Wednesday, October 11-12

AntiCamorra Field Trip in Naples and Castel Volturno

!! Save the date!!

Session 9 - Wednesday, October 16

The Economy of Crime III. Legitimate markets and organized crime

Objectives:

- Understand how organized crime penetrates legitimate markets;
- Understand why organized crime penetrates legitimate markets;
- Critically evaluate the impact of organized crime's penetration into legitimate markets

Assignment S_9: AntiCamorra Wall. See instruction on NYU Classes

Readings:

- SAVONA E. U. & BERLUSCONI G. (Eds.). 2015. *Organized Crime Infiltration of Legitimate Businesses in Europe: A Pilot Project in Five European Countries*. Final Report of Project ARIEL (www.arielproject.eu). Trento: Transcrime. OVERVIEW (16pp) + ITALY REPORT (9pp) (see NYU Classes);

In-class learning game: "New York is yours, Scarface. Choose a business..."

Session 10 - Wednesday, October 23

Midterm in-class exam and take-home essay

- The in-class exam will be administered in the first 90 minutes of the class and it will cover all the readings from Sessions 2-9.
- The essay questions will become available online from 9:00pm on October 9, 2019. **Essays, in. doc, .rtf or .pdf format, should be submitted through NYU Classes (ss7176@nyu.edu) by October 23, 2019 (11pm).**

Session 11 - Wednesday, November 6

Political Corruption and Organized Crime

Objectives:

- Understand the modalities of infiltration of organized crime into institutional arenas

- Understand reciprocity mechanisms of exchange between criminals and political authorities
- Evaluate the impact of mafia's infiltration upon corrupt networks
- Evaluate the impact of mafia's infiltration upon democracy and democratizations

Assignment S_11: CrimeObserver Assignment See instruction on NYU Classes

Readings:

- *Definition of Corruption*, miscellaneous available on NYU Classes
- Della Porta, D. & Vannucci, A. (1999), *Corrupt Exchanges: Actors, Resources and Mechanisms of Political Corruption*, New York, Aldine De Gruyter, Chapter 8;
- VARESE F. (2017), *Mafia Life*, Profile Books, London, pp. 158-188
- *Selected-Cases Box*. See MafiaToday Website

Case studies – In-class Presentations:

- *Elections and Mafia;*
- *Local Government and Mafia*

Session 12 - Wednesday, November 13

Antimafia Policies and Actions (I)

Objectives:

- Understand the institutional response to organized crime
- Understand the mobilization of grass-roots movements against organized crime
- Evaluate the impact of antimafia policies and practices

Assignment S_12: Final Project Proposal. See instruction on NYU Classes

Readings:

- La Spina, A. (2014), *The Fight Against the Italian Mafia*, In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Oxford University Press;
- Jacobs J. and Dondlinger Wyman E. (2014), *Organized Crime Control in the United States of America*, In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Oxford University Press (ONLY selected pages);

Case studies – In-class Presentations:

The use of the army as an antimafia policy

- Vanda Felbab-Brown (2013), "The Crime-War Battlefields," *Survival* 55, no. 3, pp. 147-66;

In-class learning game: Mafia Group Contest I

Session 13 - Wednesday, November 20 (END at 6:30PM)

Field Research Session II: Globalization and Organized Crime. The Prato Case

Prato, the historical capital of Italy's textile business, has attracted the largest concentration of Chinese-run industry in Europe within less than 20 years. As many as 50,000 Chinese live and work in the area, making clothes bearing the prized "Made in Italy". However, up to one third of the Chinese in Prato are illegal immigrants, according to local authorities. A large majority of the Chinese factories - virtually all of which are rented out to Chinese entrepreneurs by Italians who own the buildings - break the law in various ways. This includes using fabric smuggled from China, evading taxes and grossly violating health and labor regulations. This Field Research Session aims at exploring the phenomenon of human smuggling and trafficking in the city of Prato, at assessing the impact of the marginalization and criminalization of foreign ethnic communities, at understanding the link between crime and globalization

Objectives:

- Understand how organized crime globalizes;
- Understand the varieties of mafias' migrations;
- Explaining the success in mafias' transplantation;
- Evaluate the costs&benefits of mafias' transplantation

Assignment S_13: FieldTrip Background Report. See instruction on NYU Classes

Readings:

- VARESE, F. (2011), *Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime Conquers New Territories*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, Chapter 1,2
- SHELLEY L (2006) *The globalization of crime and terrorism*. EJournal USA: 42–45.
- Further materials will be given about the field research in Prato

Case studies – In-class Presentations:

- *Sanctuary Cities in the US*

Session 14 - Wednesday, November 27

Antimafia Policies and Actions (II)

Objectives:

- Understand the institutional response to organized crime
- Understand the mobilization of grass-roots movements against organized crime
- Evaluate the impact of antimafia policies and practices

Assignment S_14: Final Project Methods and Sources. See instruction on NYU Classes

Readings:

- Alexis Okeowo, *A Mexican Town Wages Its Own War on Drugs*, The New Yorker, November 27, 2017 Issue <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/11/27/a-mexican-town-wages-its-own-war-on-drugs>;
- Henry Partridge (2012): The determinants of and barriers to critical consumption: a study of Addiopizzo, *Modern Italy*, 17:3, 343-363

Case studies – In-class Presentations:

- *Civil Society and Mafia*
- *Social Media and Mafia*

In-class learning game: Mafia Group Contest II

Session 15 - Wednesday, December 4

Mafia Groups Contest & Field Research Session III (TBC)

Mafia Group Contest and Field Research Session on “Mafia and Antimafia in Florence”, including a visit to the bunker courthouse of Florence and to the Libera Antimafia shop in Florence (TBC)

Session 16 - Wednesday, December 11

Final exams

The **in-class exam** will be administered in the first 90 minutes of the class and it will cover all the readings from 11-15. **The final project** should be submitted through NYU Classes to the instructor by December, 11 2019 (11pm)

Classroom Etiquette

- Eating is not permitted in the classrooms. Bottled water is permitted.
- Cell phones should be turned off during class time.
- The use of personal laptops and other electronic handheld devices are prohibited in the classroom unless otherwise specified by the professor.
- We recycle! So keep it green! Please dispose of trash in the clearly marked recycle bins located throughout the on campus buildings

Required Co-curricular Activities

- 1) **Site visits** and **field trip** are mandatory (see section Class Attendance for more details). Three Field Research Sessions will be organized: Anticamorra Field Trip (October 11 & 12, 2019); (2) Prato's field research session (Nov. 20); (3) Mafia and Antimafia in Florence (**TBC** Dec. 4, 2019).