



The Politics of Organized Crime

Course Number
SOC-UA 9506 F01

Instruction Mode:
In-person

Brightspace course site
<https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/home/164449>

Spring 2022

If you are enrolled in this course 100% remotely and are not a Study Away student for NYU Florence, please make sure that you've completed the online academic orientation via Brightspace so you are aware of site specific support structure, policies and procedures. Please contact florence.academicssupport@nyu.edu if you have trouble accessing the Brightspace site.

Syllabus last updated on: January 21 2022

Lecturer Contact Information
TBA

Units earned
4

Course Details

- Wednesday from 3:30pm to 6:15pm
- All times are Central European Time (CET) Please note that there is a gap in when Daylight Savings Time (DST) begins in Europe and the U.S. In the U.S., DST begins on Sunday, 13 March 2022 when clocks will be set 1 hour forward. In Europe, DST begins Sunday, 27 March 2022.
- Location: Rooms will be posted in Albert before your first class.
- Remote Participants: Your instructor will provide you with the Zoom link via NYU Brightspace.
- COVID-related details: In the interest of protecting the NYU Florence community, we are closely following CDC guidance around COVID-19 and adjusting our



recommendations and policies accordingly. Your health and well-being is our top priority.

Course 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 also include 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.

Course Objectives

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:30%
- Weekly Assignments and in-class presentations: 20%
- Midterm Exam: In-class exam 10% and Take-home essay (1,000-words) 10%
- Final Project (max 3,000-words): 30%, including Topic Proposal (5%), Sources and Methods (5%) and Final Project Submission (20%)

You are expected to attend class in person or remote synchronously. This may include, but is not limited to, presence at synchronous class sessions, timely submission of predetermined course assignments to the instructor, collaboration with peers in group course work both during class time or independently outside of class time, individual oral or written contributions to synchronous course time through the chat function, in person discussion, or in individual office hours with the instructor. In an asynchronous format this academic engagement may take the form of written contributions to course forums, adding comments to posted work on VoiceThread or Google Drive shared docs. Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.



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.

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-world events related to organized crime that occurred in the week before the post is published (at least 2 POSTS must be edited before midterm exams). Students must use reliable sources, by following the instructions and tips available on the website (here the [link](#)).

Site Visits (TBC)

Depending on the COVID-19 situation, a site visit will be organized during the usual class schedule at the bunker courthouse and other antimafia agencies in Downtown Florence (TBC).

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 **8 to 10 pages** project presentation 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/mafیاتoday>) by publishing a post about it.



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.

The final project must be submitted online through Brightspace before May 11 2022 (11PM CET)

Attendance Policy

In order to keep each other safe, if you are not feeling well, we encourage you to remain in your residence and, if possible, attend class remotely.

Please make sure to inform your professor in advance so that they can turn on Zoom. Remote attendance is counted as regular attendance. You will not be marked absent.

For a detailed explanation of the global attendance policy, see the NYU Florence [Present vs. Absent Flowchart](#).

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation.

The Global Attendance Policy is posted in the Academic Policies tab in [Brightspace](#), on the [NYU Florence Student Portal](#) website, and is posted around campus.

After you have read and reviewed the policies, if there is anything that still needs further clarification or raises a question, please reach out to florence.academicssupport@nyu.edu.

Final exams

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between your final exams, please bring this to the attention of the Academics team. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

Late Submission of Work

Please refer to Academic Policies in [Brightspace](#).

Required Text(s)

All readings are available online on the NYU Brightspace course site. Hard copies of some textbooks are available for consultation and semester-long loans in the [Villa Ulivi Library](#). Please email florence.library@nyu.edu to reserve a copy. To request scans from books on reserve please fill out the [Ulivi Library Book Scan Form](#).

Session 1 – Friday, Jan. 28 2022

Introduction

Session 2 – Feb. 2 2022

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 (Brightspace)

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);
- LESSING, B. (2020). Conceptualizing Criminal Governance. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1-20;
- **Selected-Cases Box.** See Brightspace/MafiaToday Website

Session 3 – Feb. 9 2022

The origins of organized crime.

Objectives:

- Identify the conditions leading to the emergence of organized crime
- Identify 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 (Brightspace)

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, *Arch. 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

Session 4 – Feb. 16 2022

Organizing Crime. Sources of Mafia Power

Objectives:

- Understand the role of rituals and symbolic rules in mafias



- Explore the varieties of organizational arrangements in mafias as internal sources of criminal power
- Understand the trade-off between hierarchical vs anarchic organizations of crime
- Explore the varieties of social ties that mafias develop with local community as external sources of criminal power
- Assess the relationship between internal and external sources of criminal power

Assignment S_4: See Outline S_4 for instructions (Brightspace)

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

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

Session 5 – Feb. 23 2022

The Economy of Crime I. Illicit markets and organized crime

Objectives:

- Understand the systemic differences in the functioning of markets that operate illegally;
- Understand the multifaceted character of illegal market;
- Explore and understand the functioning of the drugs market;
- Assess the regulative role of mafia-like organizations within illegal markets.

Assignment S_5: CrimeObserver Assignment, see instruction on Brightspace

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.
- SAVIANO, R. (2005), *Gomorra*, Pan Macmillan, pp. 60-95
- BBC Documentary: *The Camorra. Italy's Bloodiest Mafia* (2011), available ONLINE (click here) or on Drive (slightly different, click here);
- Digital Materials on the MafiaToday website and Brightspace

Session 6 – March 2 2022

The Economy of Crime II. Legitimate markets and organized crime

Objectives:

- Understand how/why organized crime penetrates legitimate markets;
- Understand the protection-racket business and explain its market;



- Critically evaluate the impact of organized crime's penetration into legitimate markets

Assignment S_6: See Outline S_6 for instructions (Brightspace)

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 Brightspace);
- VARESE, F. (2013) *Protection and Extortion*, in The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime (ed L Paoli), Oxford UP (**ONLY** pp. 1 & 2)
- Digital Materials on the MafiaToday website and Brightspace

Session 7 – March 9 2022

Mid-term Exams

The **in-class exam** will be administered in person and it will cover all the readings from **Sessions 2-7**. The **take-home essay** questions will become available online from Oct. 13 2022. Essays, in .doc, .rtf or .pdf format, should be submitted through Brightspace by **March 9, 2022 (11pm CET)**.

Session 8 – March 23 2022

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_8: Is Corruption Killing Democracy? See Brightspace for instructions

Readings:

- SBERNA S.. & VANNUCCI, A. (2019), Mafia and political corruption in Italy, in Allum, Marinaro, & Scarrone, *Italian Mafias Today: Territory, Business and Politics*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019 New York, Chapter 8;
- Varese F. (2017), *Mafia Life*, Profile Books, London, pp. 158-188
- Sutton, T. (2017). Can You Separate the Fight Against Corruption from Democracy?, *The National Interest*

Policy Debate: Is Corruption Killing Democracy? See Outline S_8 for instructions (Brightspace)

Session 9 – March 30 2022



Globalization and Organized Crime.

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_9: "The World is Yours, Tony!" Mafia migration game See instruction on Brightspace

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.
- Digital materials on Brightspace

Policy Debate: Migration and Organized Crime: the Sanctuary Cities in the US

Session 10 – April 6 2022

Antimafia Policies and Actions (I) Top-down approach: the institutional response

Objectives:

- Understand the institutional response to organized crime
- Explaining the differences in antimafia legislation across countries
- Evaluate the obstacles in designing antimafia public policies
- Evaluate the impact of antimafia policies and practices

Assignment S_10: Final Project Proposal. See instruction on Brightspace

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);

Session 11 – April 13 2022

Antimafia Policies and Actions (II). Civil Society Against the Mafia

Objectives:

- Understand the mobilization of grass-roots movements against organized crime
- Explaining the differences in antimafia grassroots mobilizations
- Evaluate the impact of social media upon organized crime
- Evaluate the impact of antimafia mobilizations

Assignment S_11: Assignment. See instruction on Brightspace



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

Session 12 – April 20 2022

Antimafia Policies and Actions (III). The role of traditional and new media

Objectives:

- Evaluate the impact of social media upon organized crime
- Evaluate the impact of traditional media upon organized crime

Readings:

- Varese, F. (2018). Mafia Life: Love, Death, and Money at the Heart of Organized Crime. Oxford University Press, chapter 6, pp. 137-15;
- Garcia, Nilda M. (2020) Mexico's Drug War and Criminal Networks : The Dark Side of Social Media, Routledge, chapter 2, pp. 36-48
- Miscellaneous available on Brightspace

Assignment S_12: Final Project Methods and Sources. See instructions on Brightspace

Session 13 – April 27 2022

POC Research Fieldwork Session in Florence Downtown (TBC)

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

POC Debate: COVID-19 pandemic and on organized crime: an assessment of the impact

Session 14 – May 4 2022

Mafia Group Contest Session: see instructions on Brightspace

Session 15 – May 11 2022

Final exams

The final project should be submitted through Brightspace **by May 11 2022** (11pm CET)

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

As the University's policy on "Academic Integrity for Students at NYU" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic



Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may check your assignments by using TurnItIn or another software designed to detect offences against academic integrity.

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. It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you **MUST** inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

[NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines](#)

[NYU Library Guides](#)

Inclusivity Policies and Priorities

NYU's Office of Global Programs and NYU's global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.

Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays

Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer and Office of Academic Support in writing via email one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#)

Pronouns and Name Pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)

Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, NYU Brightspace, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the [Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website](#).

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the [Personalizing Zoom Display Names website](#).



Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through NYU Florence.

Bias Response

The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University's existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, you may do so in one of three ways:

- Online using the [Web Form \(link\)](#)
- Email: bias.response@nyu.edu
- Phone: 212-998-2277
- Local Telephone: 055 5007277