



ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of French and Italian Studies

ITALST265 - Fall 2019

Mafia Culture and the Power of Symbols, Rituals, and Myth

Monday 6:30-9:20 (SJ2-1004)

Instructor: Antonio Nicaso
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will analyze the cinematic representation of organized crime in North America. It will focus on the manner in which North American cinema productions often glorify the Mob's lifestyle. As this characterization of both the Mafia and the Mafiosi began with the archetypal figures of the bosses, special attention will be given to movies of the 1930s, as well as to Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* trilogy. The course will also analyze the depiction of other criminal organizations in popular culture, such as Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, Street gangs, the Triads, the Yakuza and the Vory v Zakone.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Understand and analyze scholarly debates about the nature of the Mafia in North America; gain an understanding of its mechanics, such as recruitment, organizational structure, and violence, that goes beyond what most people glean from its fictional representations; and understand what corruption means, what its varieties are, and how serious of a problem it is in Canada and other contemporary societies.
2. Understand and analyze the cinematic representation of the Mafia and other Mafia-type criminal organizations in North America.
3. The goal is to deconstruct the romanticized portrayal of the Italian and Italian-American gangster lifestyle created on the silver screen and on television by analyzing the atrocities committed by organized crime.

In order to do well in the course, regular attendance and completion of required reading and viewing are necessary. In particular, students should read the specified chapters from the textbook as well as other required texts given by the instructor as regular homework assignments. Note-taking is mandatory.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Made Men: Mafia Culture and the Power of Symbols, Rituals, and Myth* by Antonio Nicaso and Marcel Danesi (Roman and Littlefield).
- “The Dialects of Sin in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather Trilogy*” by Balázs Szigeti in *The AnaChronisT* 14 (2009): 24-46 ISSN 1219-2589 (available on line).
- You may also expect some additional readings, such as newspaper and magazine articles.

Required Viewing:

- *The Black Hand* (1906);
- *Little Caesar* (1931);
- *Goodfellas* (1990);
- *The Godfather, II, and III* (1972, 1974, and 1990).

An Important Note on Film Viewing

You must treat each film viewing as you would a reading. You are expected to be an active viewer, looking for historical, political, economic, social, cultural, narrative, and aesthetic meaning. You must take notes on every film you see. For each film, you are expected to be able to analyze the characters, themes, film techniques, narrative organization, historical significance, relation to history/film history, etc.

ASSESSMENT

Tests 1 and 3 (worth 25% each) will be multiple choice and short answer format. Test 2 (worth 40%) requires students to answer in essay form.

Evaluation :	Date	Value
Test n. 1	Sept. 23, 2019	25%
Test n. 2	Oct. 28, 2019	40%
Test n. 3	Dec. 2, 2019	25%
Attendance		10%
TOTAL :		100%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topics	Readings Due
1	Sept. 9, 2019	Origin and organization of the Mafia. The Black Hand in Canada and in the U.S. The Display of Power. The Mafia becomes a brand.	Chapter 1 of <i>Made Men</i> . Watch <i>The Little Caesar (1932)</i> . Screening in class of <i>The Black Hand (1906)</i>
2	Sept. 16, 2019	Honor, Omertà, The power of Code. The role of women and their representation. Analysis of <i>The Little Caesar</i> .	Chapter 2 of <i>Made Men</i>
3	Sept. 23, 2019	FIRST TEST	
4	Sept. 30, 2019	The fascination for the Mafia and Italophobia. Rituals and Symbols, Religious Symbolism, Initiation and Passage Rites.	Chapter 3 of <i>Made Men</i>
5	Oct. 7, 2019	Appearance. The Made Man. Tattoos, Gangster Chic, Enter the Movies. Names, The Gang, The Wise Guy, The Talk, Term of Distinction,	Chapters 4, and 5 of <i>Made Men</i>
6	Oct. 21, 2019	Analysis of <i>The Godfather</i>	Watch: <i>The Godfather</i> . Read: "The Dialects of Sin in Shakespeare's Macbeth and Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather Trilogy" by Balázs Szigeti in <i>The AnaChronisT</i> 14 (2009): 24-46 ISSN 1219-2589 (article available on line).
7	Oct. 28, 2019	SECOND TEST	

Week	Date	Topics	Readings Due
8	Nov. 4, 2019	Analysis of <i>The Godfather - Parts II and III</i>	Watch: <i>The Godfather Parts II and III</i> .
9	Nov. 11, 2019	Drug trafficking and Narco-Culture - Mafia and Biker Gangs	Exploring the world of Narcos and Biker Gangs: Students are required to select an article on Internet for class discussion.
10	Nov. 18, 2019	Mith, Foundation Myths, An American Myth: Cosa Nostra, Street Myths, Technology. Analysis of <i>Goodfellas</i>	Chapter 6 of <i>Made men</i> . Watch: <i>Goodfellas</i>
11	Nov. 25	Other criminal organizations: Yakuza, Triads, Vory v Zakone.	Conclusion chapter of <i>Made Men</i> .
12	Dec. 2, 2019	TEST # 3	

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Lectures begin Monday Sept. 9
 Last day to add a class Tuesday Sept. 17
 Last day to drop, no penalty Tuesday Sept. 24
 UnWaterloo holiday (Thanksgiving Day) Monday Oct. 14
 Reading Week Tuesday Oct. 15-Friday Oct. 18
 Lectures end Monday Dec. 2

POLICY ON LATE WORK, MISSED ASSIGNMENTS, AND MAKE-UP TESTS

Extension of deadlines

Students are entitled to a rescheduling of exams or an extension of deadlines for legitimate medical or compassionate reasons. Students are also entitled to rescheduling of exams based on religious grounds. However, it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor *prior* to the due date, to arrange a

timely makeup, and to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical, compassionate, or religious claim.

Class contacts

Students should have full contact information for a least two students in the class. In the case of absence, tardiness or similar, students are responsible for contacting a peer and catching up on information and work or notes that may have been missed during an absence. Instructors should not be contacted for catching up on missed work.

Copyright in instructional settings

Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. It is absolutely forbidden for a student to publish an instructor's notes to a website or sell them in any form without formal written permission.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance/participation: The course will be taught in a lecture and conversational format. All students are required to attend class regularly, to complete all required readings, and to participate actively in class discussion. Class Participation/Attendance: 10% (-8 out of 100 per any unjustified absence).

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

Cell phones are not allowed during class.

CORRESPONDENCE

For any correspondence please contact the instructor by email.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCap-proved.pdf. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Appeals, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf.

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.