

George Mason University

Spring 2016

HIST 387-DL1 History of the Mafia in Italy and the United States (online)

Course No. 15041

Instructor: Dr. Gail Hook

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the changing structures of power in the Italian Mafia, along with its relationship to politics, religion, and society. Our study takes us from the roots of the Mafia in the Middle Ages, to the growth and decline of organized crime under fascism and the migration of Sicilians to the United States. We then look at the resurfacing of the Mafia during World War II, the rise of the Cosa Nostra and drug trafficking from Sicily to the United States, and the Mafia's arrival in the United States. The course concludes with a discussion of organized crime families and syndicates in a global context, and in particular the "anti-mafia" movement, as well as how the mafia is depicted in popular culture and films. **IMPORTANT: Students should possess college-level reading and writing skills. If you have a question about this, please contact the instructor or your academic advisor.**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand the main forces in the historical development of the Mafia in Italy and Sicily
- Understand the forces that led to Italian and Sicilian immigration, and the spread of mafia activities to the United States
- Define and describe the significance of key individuals and events in the development of the Mafia in Italy and the United States
- Develop the skill to analyze historical sources and make conclusions based on that analysis
- Compose critical essays explaining the significance of historical events

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- Jane C. Schneider and Peter T. Schneider, *Reversible Destiny: Mafia, Antimafia, and the Struggle for Palermo* (paperback, University of California Press, 2003, ISBN-10: 0520236092)
- T.J. English, *Havana Nocturne: How the Mob Owned Cuba and Then Lost It to the Revolution* (paperback, William Morrow Paperbacks, reprint edition, June 9, 2009, ISBN-10: 0061712744)
- Thomas Reppetto, *American Mafia: A History of Its Rise to Power* (Holt Paperbacks; First Edition, Dec. 9, 2004, ISBN-10: 0805077987)
- Additional readings posted on Blackboard (available online)

GRADING AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

A+ = 98-100; A = 93-97; A- = 90-92;

B+ = 87-89; B = 82-86; B- = 80-81;

C+ = 77-79; C = 72-76; C- = 70-71;

D+ = 67-69; D = 62-66; D- = 60-61; F = below 60

Final semester grades are based on weekly homework assignments (30% all together), participation in the Discussion Board (10%), and two response papers (mid-term and final) (30% each). See "Homework Grade," "Discussion Board" and "Response Papers" below.

- **HOMEWORK GRADE**

The homework assignments are all worth the same percentage, which is calculated by Blackboard, regardless of the number of questions each week. This homework grade is not just an average of the number of points in each week's homework assignment.

- **DISCUSSION BOARD**

You will be assessed on your participation in the class. You should submit one thoughtful comment or question on Discussion Board each week in order to receive full participation credit. Each week is worth 1 point. Only one counts per week, but feel free to submit multiple posts and have a discussion with your classmates!

Like the homework grade, the discussion board grade is not just an average of the number of points in each week's discussion board. The discussion board posts are all together worth 10% of the final semester grade. This is calculated by the Blackboard computer.

Suggestions for discussion will be available on Blackboard each week.

- **RESPONSE PAPERS**

There are no formal exams for this course. Instead, twice during the semester you will be assigned an article or chapter to read and then write a 700-900 word response paper related to that article or chapter. You will be given several questions to answer within the response paper about the article or chapter. The idea is to explain the thesis of the article or chapter and discuss (in your own words) how it relates to the class material that you studied in that section. The article or chapter and questions will be posted at the beginning of the week that it is due, and will be due at the end of that week. Response papers are worth 100 points, like an exam. More information will be available on Blackboard.

- **Understanding your "Grade so far" on Blackboard:**

In the Grade Center on Blackboard, you will see a column labeled "Grade so far." This shows your current course grade based on the work you have completed and I have graded so far. This lets you know how you have performed in this course so far. It does NOT say "this will be your final grade if you stop working now." So use "Grade so far" to know how you have performed so far and to inspire you to keep your work at a high quality for the rest of the semester!

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students must be responsible for their own work. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code. Any student found cheating, including plagiarism, will receive a grade of "0" for the assignment or exam and may also be referred to the Dean of Student Services for additional disciplinary action. If you are unsure what plagiarism is, you should read through this website: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

MasonLive/EMAIL (GMU Email)

Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard, University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Students must follow the university policies. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>].

RESPONSIBLE USE OF COMPUTING

Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu>].

WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS

If you choose to withdraw from this class, it is your responsibility to check the appropriate deadlines and proceed with the withdrawal process.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

*The week begins on Monday, on this date

WEEK 1

*January 18 (No classes on Monday, January 18. Martin Luther King holiday)
Introduction to the class / Getting to know each other

WEEK 2

January 25 *Topics:* Brief history of Italy and Sicily / The unification of Italy 1848-1871 and nineteenth century Sicily
Read: John Dickie, "A Word at War: The Italian Army and Brigandage 1860-1870" (*History Workshop Journal*, No. 33, Spring 1992, pp. 1-24)
and
Lucy Riall, "Elites in Search of Authority: Political Power and Social Order in nineteenth-century Sicily" (*History Workshop Journal*, No. 55, Spring 2003, pp. 25-46)
Film: Excerpt from *The Leopard* (2 min.)

WEEK 3

February 1 *Topics:* Genesis of the mafia: What is the Sicilian mafia?
Read: Schneider and Schneider, *Reversible Destiny*, Chapters 1-2

WEEK 4

February 8 *Topics:* Between the world wars / Italian-Sicilian immigration
Read: Stefano Luconi, "The Changing Meaning of Ethnic Identity among Italian Americans in Philadelphia during the Inter-war Years" (*Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 63, No. 4, Autumn 1996, pp. 561-578)

WEEK 5

February 15 *Topics:* Rise and decline of the Mafia under Fascism
Read: Jack E. Reece, "Fascism, the Mafia, and the Emergence of Sicilian Separatism (1919-43)" in *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 45, No.2, June 1973, pp. 261-276

WEEK 6 February 22	<i>Topics:</i> The role of Palermo / The mafia and the Cold War <i>Read:</i> Ray Moseley, "Cold War's End Opens Door For Mafia In Europe" (<i>Chicago Tribune</i> , Dec. 29, 1992) and Schneider and Schneider, <i>Reversible Destiny</i> , Chapters 3-5
WEEK 7 February 29	No homework assignments this week Mid-term Response Paper due Sunday, March 7. See Blackboard.
WEEK 8 Monday, March 7- Sunday, March 13	SPRING BREAK. No assignments.
WEEK 9 March 14	<i>Topics:</i> The Mafia comes to Cuba <i>Read:</i> T.J. English, <i>Havana Nocturne: How the Mob Owned Cuba and Then Lost It to the Revolution</i> (entire book)
WEEK 10 March 21	<i>Topics:</i> The Mafia in New Orleans / Italian gangs of New York <i>Read:</i> Michael L. Kurtz, "Organized Crime in Louisiana History: Myth and Reality" in <i>Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association</i> , Vol. 24, No. 4, Autumn, 1983, pp. 355-376 and Thomas Reppetto, <i>American Mafia: A History of Its Rise to Power</i> , Chapters 1-2
WEEK 11 March 28	<i>Topics:</i> Law Enforcement wars on the mafia / Prohibition and the mobs / Al Capone <i>Read:</i> Daniel McDonough, "Chicago Press Treatment of the Gangster, 1924-1931" in <i>Illinois Historical Journal</i> , Vol. 82, No. 1, Spring 1989, pp. 17-32 and Thomas Reppetto, <i>American Mafia: A History of Its Rise to Power</i> , Chapters 3-7
WEEK 12 April 4	<i>Topics:</i> The rise of the Cosa Nostra and drug trafficking from Sicily to the United States/ Lucky Luciano / The Mobs go national / The Feds and the Mafia <i>Read:</i> "La Cosa Nostra in Drug Trafficking" from <i>Organized Crime in America</i> , P 31-41, 1987, Timothy S Bynum, ed. - NCJ-104665 (U.S. Gov. doc.) and Federal Bureau of Investigation report "Italian Organized Crime" at http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/organizedcrime/italian_mafia and Thomas Reppetto, <i>American Mafia: A History of Its Rise to Power</i> , Chapters 8-11
WEEK 13 April 11	<i>Topics:</i> Mafia in writing and film <i>Read:</i> Thomas Reppetto, <i>American Mafia: A History of Its Rise to Power</i> , Chapters 12-15 and Gardaphe, "Re-Inventing Sicily in Italian American Writing and Film" (<i>MELUS</i> , Vol. 28, No. 3, Italian American Literature, Autumn, 2003, pp. 55-71) and watch film on blackboard: Excerpts from <i>Godfather II</i> and <i>Goodfellas</i>

WEEK 14

April 18

Topics: The “Anti-mafia” movement, 1980s to today*Read:* Schneider and Schneider, *Reversible Destiny*, Chapters 6-12 (end of book)

WEEK 15

April 25

Topics: Decline of the American Mafia?*Read:* Thomas Reppetto, *American Mafia: A History of Its Rise to Power*, Epilogue, “The Decline of the American Mafia” (pp. 270-278) and article “When Mobsters Refuse to Retire: in *AARP Magazine*, Dec. 2015/Jan. 2016

WEEK 16

May 2

Monday, May 2

Last day of classes

Tuesday, May 3

Reading day

Wed. May 4 – Wed. May 11

Exam period

RESPONSE PAPER #2 due Sunday, May 8