SO/LT300 – A Mafia Story: Its Representation in Literature, Cinema, and Television

Prof. MARIA SEPA

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:

3. Women in, against and around the Mafia (testimonies, Roberta Torre’s films)
4. Mafia and the children (I’m Not Scared, film and book)
5. Mafia and business (Gomorra, film and book)
6. Mafia in tv series (The Sopranos, La piovra, Il commissario Montalbano)

PREREQUISITES

None

METHOD OF TEACHING

The course will alternate lectures, class discussions, students presentations. Great emphasis will be given to the active participation of the student.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each student will be asked to write two short papers in response to the readings and the screenings that will be discussed in class. They will have to give an oral presentation based on their work. There will be a midterm, and a final exam. Attendance is mandatory, as well as the punctual reading of the material assigned weekly.

CREDITS

6 ECTS

GRADING

Attendance and class participation 15 % of final grade
Papers + class presentations 25 % of final grade
Midterm test 30 % of final grade
Final written exam 30 % of final grade

COURSE READINGS AND MATERIALS

Novels:

Films:
1. Luchino Visconti, Il gattopardo (1963)
2. Francesco Rosi, Salvatore Giuliano (1962)
4. Damiano Damiani, Il giorno della civetta (1968)

Extra readings and the lectures slide will be available on Blackboard.
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.usalibriblogspot.it/, and http://italiannewsclicks.blogs.emmanuel.edu/. She is the author of Milano downtown, a novel (Manni, 2013).

E-MAIL ADDRESS

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