UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Socio-Economics Dynamics and Organized Crime

2425-2-F8803N020

Learning objectives

At the end of the course, students will have acquired:
• Knowledge of the main theories and socio-economic dynamics that influence the development of criminal organizations.
• Understanding of the organizational structures, leadership models, and operational strategies used by different types of criminal organizations.
• Ability to analyze the economic and social context in which criminal organizations operate, including the conditions that favor their establishment and development.
• Ability to evaluate the impact of criminal activities on the economy and society at local, national, and international levels.
• Skills to analyze money laundering mechanisms and other illegal economic practices used by criminal organizations.
• Ability to integrate knowledge from various disciplines (sociology, economics, law, criminology) for a holistic understanding of criminal dynamics.
• Critical analysis and problem-solving skills to address challenges related to security and risk management.
• Ability to find, understand, and critically use scientific texts on organized crime.

Contents

The central theme of the course is the study of the interrelations between socio-economic contexts and dynamics in the North and South of the world and the functioning of organized crime groups. The course delves into the main theoretical perspectives on organized crime and examines its various manifestations in terms of types of organizations and their relationships with the societies in which they operate. Topics covered include:
• Introduction to the course and to the learning verification strategies
• Conceptual, definitional, and theoretical framework of organized crime
• Mafia-type organized crime
• Non-Western perspectives on organized crime

• Money laundering and illicit financial flows
• Organized crime and terrorism
• Concepts of illegal markets and transnational crime
• Interpretive theories of illegal markets and transnational crimes
• Drug market and drug trafficking

Detailed program

The course analyzes the interrelations between socio-economic contexts and the functioning of organized crime groups at local and global levels. Students will be introduced to the main conceptual, definitional, and theoretical frameworks of organized crime, focusing on the different manifestations and types of criminal organizations both in the Western world and in non-Western perspectives. The analysis will cover crucial aspects such as mafia-style organized crime, money laundering, illicit financial flows, and transnational illegal markets. Additionally, the course will explore themes such as the distinction between organized crime and terrorism and the mechanisms regulating the illegal markets in which organized crime groups operate.
Through lectures, seminars, case study analysis, and group work, the course aims to provide students with a deep understanding of the dynamics characterizing organized crime and its impacts on contemporary society. Students will be guided in understanding the specificities and complexities of the scientific analysis of criminal phenomena, developing critical and methodological skills essential for addressing global security and risk management challenges. The course pays particular attention to themes with high demand for qualified personnel from private companies and public institutions, such as money laundering, illicit financial flows, and the evolution of drug markets. More generally, by analyzing aspects like mafia-style organized crime, infiltration into the legal economy, and transnational illegal markets, the course equips students with the necessary skills to identify and counter security threats. These educational elements enable professionals to intercept and manage the causes and mechanisms that lead to the emergence of complex criminal dynamics, providing effective prevention responses and tools, thus improving the security and resilience of communities and organizations.

Prerequisites

Basic understanding of written English.

Teaching methods

The course consists of 56 hours of in-person instruction, approximately 60% of which involves expository teaching (lectures with slide support) and 40% interactive teaching (presentations of examples and practical cases, class discussions, exercises). The course includes periods of independent study of manuals, and scientific articles.

Assessment methods

Attending and non-attending students are assessed through an oral exam based on open-ended questions about the course topics and bibliography:
• All questions contribute equally to the final grade;
• Each question is evaluated from 0 (if unanswered) to 31 points (if impeccably answered);

• Scores above 30 correspond to a grade of 30 with honors.
The competencies evaluated through the oral exam are:
• Ability to present fundamental notions and key concepts related to the macro classes of crimes addressed during the course in a concise, clear, effective, and formally correct manner;
• Ability to critically analyze criminological theories and criminal phenomena covered in the program.
Consequently, the evaluation criteria for the oral exam are:

1. Content accuracy;
2. Logical organization of responses;
3. Conceptual and expository clarity;
4. Ability to synthesize;
5. Appropriate use of specific terminology;
6. Critical thinking.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Given the international orientation of the discipline and the lack of Italian textbooks that cover all the course topics, the bibliography includes material in English. The course bibliography is provided to both attending and non-attending students in a file available on the instructor's webpage and includes readings from:
• Letizia Paoli (Ed.). The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime. New York: Oxford University Press. 2014.
• Alberto Aziani. Illicit Financial Flows: An Innovative Approach to Estimation. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. 2018.
• Andrew Silke (Ed.). Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism. New York – Abingdon: Routledge. 2019.
• Paul M. Heywood (Ed.). Routledge Handbook of Political Corruption. New York: Routledge. 2014.
• Scientific papers.

Sustainable Development Goals

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS