UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Complex Organizations

2526-3-E1601N078

Learning objectives

This course aims to equip students with theoretical and conceptual tools to study mafias.
•** **Knowledge and Understanding**: gain an in-depth understanding of mafias as organizations, with particular attention to the interaction between structures and strategies, and relationships with the socio-economic environment.
• **Applied Knowledge and Understanding**: apply concepts and theoretical frameworks from organizational studies to recognize and analyze the key features of mafia organizations.
• **Judgment**: develop the ability to critically evaluate sources and formulate independent judgments based on empirical evidence.
• **Communication Skills**: clearly and effectively describe criminal organizations.
• **Learning Skills**: acquire the analytical skills necessary to independently study the mafia phenomenon.

Contents

The course focuses on the following topics:
• Organizational structures
• Organizational orders and the use of violence
• Activities and markets
• Rules and rituals
• Communication
• Mafia environments and expansion into non-traditional territories
• Organizational dilemmas

Detailed program

Mafias represent a specific and highly organized form of crime, characterized by extra-legal governance structures aimed at providing protection. Mafias are organizations that seek to control markets and territories, offering their clients “services” such as protection from extortion and the elimination of competitors. The course examines the main organizational dimensions of mafias, with particular attention to their activities, target markets, and modes of penetration into the socio-economic fabric. It also explores the internal rules designed to maintain secrecy, organize operations, and manage violence. Finally, the course presents the main theoretical perspectives on the diffusion of mafias into non-traditional areas, such as Northern Italy, and on the socio-economic factors that facilitate their entrenchment.

Prerequisites

Elements of logical reasoning, and knowledge of current events.

Teaching methods

The course is taught in italian. The course combines lectures, case study analyses, and group work. The course comprises 56 hours, with approximately 60% lecture-based and 40% interactive lessons. All sessions are conducted in person.

Assessment methods

No mid-term tests are planned. Learning will be assessed through a written exam consisting of four open-ended questions based on the contents of the textbook. Each question will be graded from 0 to 7.5 points.
Assessment criteria include:
• Knowledge of theoretical concepts and key empirical aspects of mafias
• Ability to connect and integrate different topics
• Clarity and logical organization of content
• Mastery of specialized language

Textbooks and Reading Materials

For all students:
Catino, M. (2020), Le organizzazioni mafiose. La mano visibile dell'impresa criminale, il Mulino, Bologna.

Erasmus students who do not understand Italian may arrange an ad hoc program in English.

Sustainable Development Goals

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