UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Mafie, Organizzazioni Criminali e Devianza d'Impresa

2627-1-F8805N031

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding (Dublin 1)
• sound knowledge of the main sociological, economic and criminological theories concerning the development and functioning of criminal organizations and mafias;
• understanding of organizational models, internal hierarchies, leadership logics and the relationships between criminal organizations and their social and economic contexts;
• knowledge of the concepts of deviance, crime, white-collar crime, corporate crime, organizational wrongdoing and organizational misconduct;
• understanding of the organizational factors that may foster illegal or harmful conduct in firms.

Applying knowledge and understanding (Dublin 2)
• critically analyse social, economic and organizational contexts in order to identify vulnerabilities to criminal embeddedness, infiltration into the legal economy and corporate deviance;
• distinguish, in empirical cases, between organized crime, occupational crime, corporate crime and forms of organizational wrongdoing that cannot always be reduced to individual intentions;
• apply organizational analysis to cases of corporate crime and corporate deviance;
• assess the impact of criminal activities and deviant corporate conduct on social cohesion, public trust, economic legality and the resilience of communities and organizations.

Making judgments (Dublin 3)
• integrate different theoretical and methodological approaches to interpret complex criminal and organizational phenomena;
• critically evaluate information sources, judicial cases, organizational documents, media materials and public policies concerning organized crime and corporate deviance;
• reflect independently on the ethical, social and organizational implications of prevention, control, compliance, whistleblowing and corporate responsibility strategies.

Communication skills (Dublin 4)
• communicate, orally and in writing, well-argued analyses of mafias, criminal organizations, white-collar crime,

corporate crime and organizational wrongdoing;
• present case studies, research findings and evaluations in a way that is accessible and rigorous for both specialist and non-specialist audiences;
• use appropriate technical and multidisciplinary language in academic and professional contexts.

Learning skills (Dublin 5)
• independently find and interpret scientific literature, documentary sources and empirical cases on organized crime, organizational deviance and corporate crime;
• continuously update their knowledge of organizational transformations, economic control mechanisms and new corporate responsibilities;
• connect the acquired knowledge to new research and professional fields related to security, legality, welfare, social justice, compliance and organizational risk prevention.

Contents

The central theme of the course is the study of the interrelations between socio-economic contexts and dynamics in the Global North and Global South and the functioning of organised crime groups. The course explores the main theoretical perspectives on organised crime and examines several of its manifestations in terms of types of organisations and their relationships with the societies in which they operate. The topics through which this analysis is developed are:

• Introduction to the course and assessment methods
• Conceptual, definitional and theoretical framework of organised crime
• Mafia-type organised crime
• Non-Western perspectives on organised crime
• Illicit financial flows
• Organised crime and terrorism
• Organisational deviance, white-collar crime and corporate crime
• Normal organisational wrongdoing and organisational factors of wrongdoing
• Corporate actors, supply chains, platforms and corporate responsibility

Detailed program

Extended programme

The course analyses the interrelations between socio-economic contexts and the functioning of organised crime groups at local and global levels. After introducing the main conceptual, definitional and theoretical frameworks of organised crime, the course examines different forms of organised crime, with particular attention to mafia-type crime, non-Western perspectives, illicit financial flows, and the relationship between organised crime and terrorism.

Part of the course is devoted to organisational deviance and corporate crime, with reference to the concepts of white-collar crime, corporate crime, normal organisational wrongdoing and the corporate actor. The course analyses the organisational factors that may foster illegal or harmful conduct, as well as the role of firms, supply chains, platforms, and systems of responsibility and control.

Through lectures, case analyses, discussions and exercises, the course aims to provide theoretical and methodological tools for understanding complex criminal phenomena and for developing critical skills useful for risk analysis, prevention, and the management of security threats affecting communities, institutions and organisations.

Prerequisites

Basic understanding of written English.

Teaching methods

The course includes a total of 56 hours of in-person teaching, structured as follows:

- approximately 60% delivered through lecture-based (erogative) teaching (DE), consisting of traditional frontal lectures in english supported by slide presentations;
- approximately 40% delivered through interactive teaching (DI), including classroom discussions, presentation and analysis of practical examples and case studies, and individual or group exercises.

In addition to classroom activities, students are expected to engage in independent study, which includes reading the assigned textbooks and selected scientific articles, preparing for class discussions, and reviewing lecture materials.

This teaching structure is designed to balance the transmission of core knowledge with the development of critical thinking and applied analysis skills, in line with the learning objectives of the course.

Assessment methods

Assessment is based on an individual oral exam, valid for both attending and non-attending students. The interview consists of three open-ended questions, each concerning the main topics of the course and the bibliography.

Assessment method and grading criteria:

- Each question contributes 33.3% to the final grade.
- Each answer is graded on a scale from 0 to 31 points:
  • 0 points: unanswered or irrelevant content.
  • 18 points: minimum pass, basic understanding.
  • 24 points: positive result, generally accurate with some gaps (average performance).
  • 27–29 points: good command of the subject and clarity of presentation.
  • 30 points: excellent performance.
  • 31 points: outstanding answer, equivalent to 30 with honors (cum laude).

The average score from the three questions is converted into a final grade on a scale of thirty.

Evaluation criteria:

1. Accuracy of content;
2. Logical organization of the answer;
3. Conceptual and verbal clarity;
4. Ability to synthesize;
5. Proper use of technical terminology;
6. Critical thinking skills.

Skills assessed according to the Dublin Descriptors:

- Dublin 1 (knowledge and understanding): mastery of key concepts and core notions;
- Dublin 2 (applying knowledge and understanding): linking theory to real-world social phenomena;
- Dublin 3 (making judgments): critical reflection on theoretical frameworks and criminal phenomena;
- Dublin 4 (communication skills): clear exposition, correct terminology, logical structure;
- Dublin 5 (learning skills): independent and deep understanding of the material.

In the overall assessment, the following approximate weights are assigned to the competencies:

- Accuracy of content (Dublin 1): 25%
- Application of knowledge (Dublin 2): 20%
- Critical thinking and independent judgment (Dublin 3): 20%
- Clarity and logical structure of exposition (Dublin 4): 20%
- Appropriate use of discipline-specific terminology (Dublin 4): 10%
- Learning autonomy and independent re-elaboration (Dublin 5): 5%

Self-assessment activities:
Throughout the course, in-class self-assessment activities will be proposed, including exercises and exam simulations with immediate feedback from the instructor.
These activities **will not contribute to the final grade**, but are intended to:

- support students in their independent study;
- clarify the expectations of the final exam;
- help identify any weaknesses in preparation.

Sample questions

1. How do classical and contemporary sociological theories interpret the rise of organized crime?
2. Discuss how structural inequality can facilitate the establishment of criminal organizations in urban or rural settings.
3. Compare the explanatory power of the rational choice theory versus cultural criminology in understanding organized crime.
4. Explain the operational differences between hierarchical and networked models of organized crime.
5. What are the socio-economic consequences of illicit financial flows on local communities?
6. Critically examine a real-world example of transnational organized crime and its interaction with global economic systems.

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.
• Scientific papers and texts.

Sustainable Development Goals

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS