COMPARATIVE MAFIA:
The political economy and sociology of protection-producing enterprises
Spring 2008

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Course description
The course addresses the role of organizations with comparative advantage in the use of force in economic and social life. The particular focus is on the private enterprises that produce and sell protection and enforcement and compete with the state. Hence the class includes theoretical exploration in the political economy and sociology of protection enterprises, especially of those known as the mafia. Of particular importance is a comparative dimension – an account of different historical and national mafias. A large part of the class is reserved for a detailed account of Russian organized crime, violent entrepreneurship and politics of state-building.

Course requirements
10 lectures, 12 seminar discussions
Active participation in discussion sessions, 1 final essay about 4000-4500 words

1. Coercion and political power. The state of nature and the civil state. Political community. The nature of protection racket. The monopoly of legitimate violence and state formation. Private protection; protection as public good.


4. The mafia (“La Cosa Nostra”) and gangsters in the USA in 1920-30s and after. Debates over the nature of the mafia and organized crime. Other types of mafia-like networks: Yakudza, the Triads, the Cocaine cartels in Central America. Local and universal features of organized crime. Economic theories of organized crime.


7. The covert fragmentation of the Russian state. The evolution of the state coercive agencies. Private protection companies and their functions at the emerging markets. The market of private protection and relations between public and private security. Private security in comparative perspective.


10. The state and economy: developmental dilemmas. How large and strong the state should be to provide development and growth. Predatory versus developmental state in comparative perspective. South Korean developmental dictatorship and other comparative cases.

Readings for discussion sessions

One or two texts will be assigned for discussion in the class. To write a good essay, however, students are encouraged to read “other readings”, most of which will be compiled either into a separate file or placed on reserve shelf in the library.

Session 1

Compulsory readings


Other readings


Session 2

Compulsory readings

Other readings


Session 3

Compulsory readings


Other readings


Session 4

Compulsory readings


Other readings


Session 5

Compulsory readings


Other readings

J. Serio, A. Razinkin, "Thieves Professing the Code: The Traditional Role of vory v zakone in Russia's Criminal World". Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement. 1995, 4, 1, p. 72-88;

Session 6

Compulsory readings


Other readings


Session 7

Compulsory readings


Other readings


Session 8

Compulsory readings

Other readings


Session 9

Compulsory readings

A selection of texts on the YUKOS affair

Session 10

Compulsory readings

Peter Evans, “Predatory, Developmental and Other Apparatuses: A Comparative Political Economy Perspective on the Third World State”, *Sociological Forum*, 1989, vol. 4 No 4, pp. 561-587; The text on *The Mafioso State and Big Business in South Korea*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ESSAY TOPICS
(These are not compulsory; students are encouraged to invent their own titles)

- Explain the relationship between property rights, type of enforcement, and economic performance
- Is there a qualitative difference between the state and protection racket?
- What is the nature of the mafia? Compare the existing interpretations of the Sicilian and other mafias and assess their relative explanatory power
- Assess the strong sides and shortcoming of the economic vision of organized crime. Should society aim at eliminating organized crime?
- “Organized crime is a primitive and predatory form of elementary capitalism and rudimentary power politics” (P. Lupsha). Do you agree? Justify your answer.
- What caused the rise of post-Soviet organized crime?
- What is the best way to conceptualize the post-Soviet criminal phenomena
- Relate the business of private protection to market building and state formation in Russia
- Compare violent entrepreneurship in Russia to other existing types of mafia-like networks
- The state, mafia and economic development. How strong and how large the state should be to provide for development?
- Why did the state destroy and nationalize YUKOS?
- The concept and practice of developmental state