

The Godfather Project

This project has you watching Francis Ford Coppola's 1972 masterpiece and relating it to readings on and by Italian Americans, especially from Regina Barreca's book *Don't Tell Mama* and Lou Corsino's *The Neighborhood Outfit*. In addition, please read the excerpts from *The Godfather*—Mario Puzo's novel—and the first few pages of the movie's screen play in the [Supplements](#) section of my website, and finally [my review](#) of *The Godfather*, as well as of a film spoofing it, [The Freshman](#).



As a side light, you might also want to check out the famous *Sight and Sound* lists of the 100 greatest movies of all time—one by critics, one by directors—taken every 10 years since 1952. *Sight and Sound* is the journal of the British Film Institute. In the 2012 [critics](#) poll *The Godfather* is #21, and Coppola has three films in the top 31. In the [directors](#) list Coppola has three films in the top 30—two in the top 10!--and here *The Godfather* rises to #7.

After reading and watching, answer the following questions.

1) In the opening sequences of the film, Vito Corleone—the “Godfather,” played iconically by Marlon Brandon—grants two favors (or “services”) to people who have come to his daughter’s wedding celebration. Contrast these two “services”—one given to Buonasera the undertaker, the other to Nazorino the baker—especially in the light of what Corsino has to say about the mundane vs. the violent.

2) Write about Lucca Brassi, one of Don Corleone’s most trusted henchmen, especially in comparison (or contrast) to “Three Finger Brown” and, perhaps, “The Whale,” two characters in Frank Lentricchia’s excerpt in Barreca’s book. How do these two compare to what Corsino says most of the people involved in the “organization” are like?



3) Write about the importance of “family” in the film, the novel, Corsino’s book, and my review of *The Freshman*. How might the concept of “family” soften, or make more palatable, the criminal activities of the Mafia.* Also, relate this to the dynamics Richard Gambino describes between first and second generation Italians. That is, what’s Michael’s attitude towards “family”? How does this attitude finally play out?

* **IF** you have seen gangster/organized crime films featuring blacks—or films like *Boyz in the Hood*, *Menace 2 Society*, etc.—you might comment on the difference in the portrayal of the family in such films vs. *The Godfather*. I believe the portrayals are distinctly different in most cases. For one thing, in “black films” the criminal element is often portrayed as attacking the family from the outside, and this element is seen as a “gang,” not as “organized crime.” What difference might this make in society’s view of Italian vs. Black crime, Italian vs. Black families, Italians vs. Blacks as moral people?