Francis Ford Coppola’s Godfather (1972)

What do we learn about the immigrant experience from this movie?
To what extent does the maffia embody basic American values and the American Dream?
What do Vito and Michael Corleone stand for?
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What do Vito and Michael Corleone stand for?
Mario Puzo (1920-1999)

Born in NYC, his parents immigrated from Sicily. 1969 best-seller Godfather written based on material gathered as a journalist.
Francis Ford Coppola (1939-),
Born in Detroit of Italian descent.
His father Carmine Coppola flutist
and composer
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Born in Detroit of Italian descent,
His father Carmine Coppola flutist and composer
Francis Ford Coppola (1939-)
UCLA film School

From early 1960s various undistinguished movies, Academy Award for Screenplay of Patton 1971

Los Angeles

Paramount gives him the contract for Godfather 1972
3 Oscars including Best Picture and Best Actor for Brando

Followed by Godfather II in 1974
6 Oscars including Best Picture and Best Director

Godfather III in 1990 all co-written with Puzo
Method Acting

Constantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) -- Russian theatre director

New York Actors Studio
Led by Lee Strasberg (1901-1982) -- (played Roth in Godfather 2)

Notable Actors:
Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Robert Duvall, Robert Di Niro,

Also:
Dustin Hoffman, Marilyn Monroe, Jane Fonda, Robert Redford,
Coppola was chosen to direct after several directors declined including Sergio Leone and Peter Bogdanovich.

Big fight with Paramount that wanted Ernest Borgnine for Vito Corleone.

Robert Redford, Ryan O’Neal or James Caan for Michael.

Studio had a "backup director" to replace Coppola if they felt necessary.

The Godfather was a very unappreciated movie when we were making it. They were very unhappy with it. They didn’t like the cast. They didn’t like the way I was shooting it. I was always on the verge of getting fired. So it was an extremely nightmarish experience. I had two little kids, and the third one was born during that. We lived in a little apartment, and I was basically frightened that they didn’t like it. They had as much as said that, so when it was all over I wasn’t at all confident that it was going to be successful, and that I’d ever get another job.
Originally: Sicilian criminal secret society (Cosa Nostra) created after the 1860 unification of Italy — resistance to centralization encouraged by the Papal State (Vatican)

Confederation of groups or (cosche = family)

Exercise sovereignty over a certain territory

Usurp functions normally performed by the state (policing, criminal justice, protecting the weak)

Induction ritual -- omertà (wove of silence)
Prohibition in the U.S. 1920-1933 (18th amendment to the US Constitution)

AL CAPONE

Carlo Gambino

Guiseppe Masseria
Gambling legalized in Nevada in 1931
(air conditioning)
During WWII the mafia cooperated with the Allied forces against Mussolini providing intelligence (Vito Genovese)
AMERICAN DREAM

What do we learn about the immigrant experience from this movie?

To what extent does the maffia embody basic American values and the American Dream?

What do Vito and Michael Corleone stand for?
American Dream from the OUTSIDE

American Dream: Being Accepted

And Vito and Michael are NEVER accepted
AMERICAN DREAM

What do we learn about the immigrant experience from this movie?

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What do Vito and Michael Corleone stand for?
You never can leave the past behind

Importance of ethnic networks in the host country

Racism/ethnic hatred

Cycle: new immigrants start at the bottom and over generations they can move up in prestige and income
AMERICAN DREAM

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What do Vito and Michael Corleone stand for?
Family Values
Religion
Entrepreneurship
Professionalism
Efficiency
Self-made man
Conspicuous consumption
Suspicion of government
Free enterprise
Guns
Violence as justice (Westerns)
AMERICAN DREAM

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What do Vito and Michael Corleone stand for?
They stand for ruthless upward mobility
What do Vito and Michael Corleone stand for?