

## **ITA 1001.01 Honored Societies: Masons, Mafia, and, Fraternities**

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R 2:35-3:50pm (ten weekly 75-min. sessions: 1/12-3/23)

### **Course Description**

The Commons Reading has been instituted as a tool to help foster meaningful discussion among Vanderbilt Visions groups while simultaneously creating a shared experience among the 1600+ incoming first year students. The selected texts have always dealt with societal issues that many incoming students face, placing them in a different framework that allows for some perspective and poignant self-reflection. One of the most important issues incoming students deal with is the need to belong, to find their place, and to feel value in what they're doing. Historically, fraternities, sororities, and clubs have been a way to for students to find their place on campus and have been particularly popular among Vanderbilt students.

This Commons Seminar will examine the various Honored Societies that have held our attention for years on end. From the Masons to Panhellenic Fraternities, we will analyze the idea of the Honored Society ending with a frank investigation into the four Italian mafias. Our study will allow us to confront the stereotypes of these organizations, the allure and draw for members, and finally their impact on society.

After an introduction to the historical vs. modern idea of Honored Societies, each class meeting will focus on a different Honored Society and arrive at the four mafias of Italy. We will use John Dickie's book *Blood Brotherhoods* as our base text to discuss the Italian mafias, as well as other short articles and excerpts posted to the course blackboard page.

Each student will be asked to contribute to online discussion boards with poignant questions to help prepare for class discussion and to engage in meaningful debate and conversation in our seminar meetings. In addition, each student will complete a final poster project based on a specific honored society or related event to be presented at the end of the Commons Seminar.

### **Evaluation**

Students will be evaluated on participation and class discussion about the course readings and the topic for the day, a final poster project, and online discussion boards, which will help prepare students for the day's discussion.

Poster Project 30%

Class Participation 40%

Discussion Boards 30%

### **Required Reading**

John Dickie's *Blood Brotherhoods*

Other articles/excerpts posted to blackboard

Short videos posted to blackboard