

The Making of the Mafia (1931)



Committee Background Guide

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AHPMUN VII



Letter From Your Director

Hi everyone! I am Jackson Arnberg and I'm extremely hyped to be the crisis director as well as Secretary General of AHPMUN VII.

I'm a senior at American Heritage and have been doing Model UN since freshman year. While I'm extremely devoted to Model UN and have been for my entire high school experience, I also play varsity basketball and am looking to play at the next level (either at an Ivy or high academic D3). When I'm not balling or MUNing, you can catch me always hanging out with my boys, or doing something school related. Although I'll be out of the room reading your crisis notes most of the time, my job as Secretary General may require that I leave the room at times, but I've made sure that our room's amazing other staff is well prepared.

I'm extremely passionate about the United States history, and I think the involvement of the American Mafia, especially at its peak, is one of the most neglected, yet most intriguing topics that exists. There's a lot more on what this committee is and what I expect, but just know that you can expect me to be running into the room with crisis updates multiple times throughout the weekend.

I really look forward to meeting all of you guys and seeing what you have in mind for how to not only improve the mafia against the facing troubles, but also about how your personal characters wants will advance throughout the weekend. Good luck! Oh also, if you have questions I'd love to respond so reach me at pl224062@ahschool.com.

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General Introduction to the Committee

The committee will begin on December 31st, 1931 with a breaking update and will track the rise of the five families and organized crimes. In 1931, Salvatore Maranzano formally organized the previously warring gangs into the Bonanno, Colombo, Gambino, Genovese, and Lucchese crime families. There is much more information on the formation of the Commission later, but this was the largest consolidation of organized crime in the history of the United States. Members of the committee will represent leaders and crucial figures of their respective families as they work together to protect organized crime and work against each other to fight for control.



What is the Mafia?

The American Mafia is an Italian-American organized criminal society. The namesake is derived from the original Sicilian Mafia, and the American Mafia in fact began as a subgroup of the Sicilian Mafia. The mafia began as many Italian based gangs within the states, and as it's power and political influence rose, many of the crime groups were absorbed and condensed into a couple, extremely powerful "families. The mafia stemmed from the poor, mostly Italian immigrant neighborhoods and ghettos of New York City, concentrated firmly in areas of East Harlem, the Lower East Side, and Brooklyn. Throughout the late 19th century and early 20th, the mafia gained a lot of clout and raged its influence into the most powerful organized crime group in the history of the United States.



People look at the mafia in many different ways, and it is called many different things, from a cult to a bloodbath of organized fighting; but, by far the most important note on this mafia is their one central goal: make money by any means.

Immigrating to New York

The American Mafia is a separate entity from the Sicilian Mafia located in Sicily, Italy it is crucial to note the importance of Italian roots in the American Mafia. The word ‘Mafia’ derived from a Sicilian-Arabic slang term “mafioso.” the term ‘*mafioso*’ had no criminal significance. Instead, it began as a way of life, for individuals to protect their family from the injustice of government. According to author Selwyn Raab, it also held the meaning of “acting as a protector against the arrogance of the powerful.” It is said that many Italian Mob families would not allow a member in if both their parents, or at least their father was not Italian. A loyalty to Cosa Nostra is a loyalty to Italy as well.





Structure of the Families

The Boss

Also known as the Don, the Boss was the undisputed leader of each family or organization. He was the number one in the family and superior to every other member.

The Underboss

Second in command to the Boss, the Underboss was also a powerful influence over the organization. He was often a part of the family, possibly destined to one day fulfill the higher position and take over the family business.

The Consigliere

The Consigliere was the chief advisor to the Boss. A very trustworthy friend and confidant, the Consigliere was often the third from the top of the family.

The Caporegime

Shortened to “Capo” when the mafia moved to the states. The Caporegime lead a crew of soldiers, similar to a military captain. Although they were not part of the family’s top three, the Caporegime was a highly ranked member of the organization.

Soldiers

Commonly referred to as a “made-man”, soldiers came underneath the Caporegime. They were the lowest ranked family members, though still commanding respect in the industry. To become made, candidates would be required to take an oath of silence known as *omerta*. Some families also required them to commit a murder in addition to the oath.

Associates

Associates were part of the crew but were not made. They would commit crimes under the guidance of the made members and would be required to offer up a share of their illegal profits to their direct made superior.

Prior to the Commission

Prior to the commission, the mafia didn't have much of a structure and they had an unwritten constitution of loyalty that all the members would follow. Some of the main ones that are still in practice today in some parts of the American Mafia is to not be associated with the cops, always tell the truth and treat family with respect.

During the period of prohibition of alcohol in the United States, the Mafia groups were able to make fortunes and dominate the organized crime industry in their respective cities. This industry allowed the members of the Mafia to be organized into what we know as Mafia 'families'. While this industry did bring great wealth to the Italian-American Mafia families it also caused violence and wars to begin between different families. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Commission_\(mafia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Commission_(mafia))

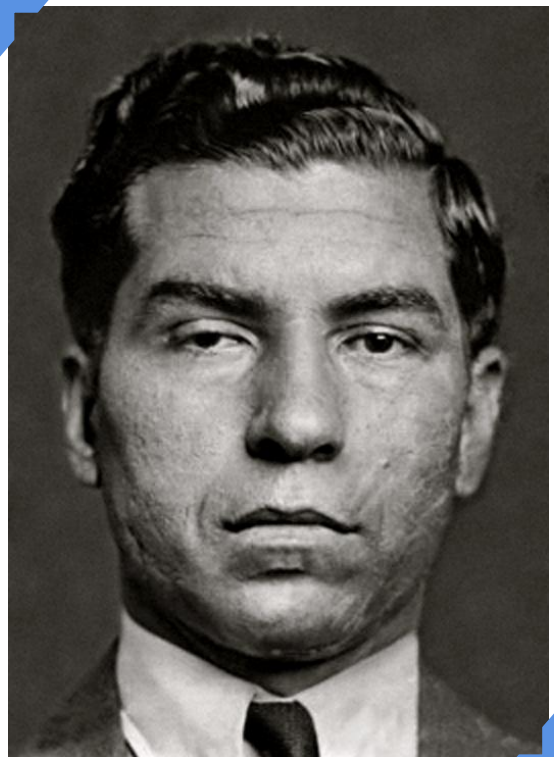
As the violence progressed, different ethnic groups began to fight for control in their cities and by the end of the 1920s and into the early 1930s the Castellammarese War occurred. This war to fight for complete dominance of the criminal world ended with the establishment of the Capo dei capi, the head of the mob. The title was created to centralize the control under one person who was the head or the boss of all bosses. This man was Salvatore Maranzano, as the first leader of the American Mafia he created the structure for it with different families and a code of conduct for everyone to follow. As the boss of all bosses he also took action to have all of the families pay tribute to him. This was the last action that put the members of the Mafia over the edge until someone took the initiative to murder him and reform the structure of the mafia.



The Commission

Before his death, when Salvatore Marzano applied the word *Capo dei capi* to his role in the mafia, he ordered that as a part of this new role he had every Mafia family would pay him tribute. This dysfunctional system of having one boss gave one family more control than others and this provoked other members of the mafia to rebel against this. Lucky Luciano, an Italian-born mobster and the first official boss of the Genovese family, organized the murder of Marzano and created the Commission in 1931. After the murder of the boss of all bosses a meeting was called in Chicago to create a new system to replace the old, and make sure that all the crime families agreed on the new establishment.

Eventually, the families arrived at a consensus led by Charlie 'Lucky' Luciano. They established a board of directors made up by the bosses of the 5 different families that would regulate the dealings of the Mafia in the United States and serve to get rid of conflicts. This was called the Commission and its chairman was Charlie Luciano, and while all members were officially supposed to have the same power (decisions were made by majority vote), it sometimes appeared as though Luciano's position as Chairman gave him and his allies more power in the Commission.





The Five Families

Bonanno

Led by Joseph Bonanno, the Bonanno crime family was responsible for a criminal empire that stretched from Brooklyn to California. This family was the first to be kicked off of the Commission, which was a council of bosses appointed to maintain order in the mafia. The reason being that there were allegations that the family was actively participating in the dealing of heroin and the family had internal struggles for leadership.

Colombo

The Colombo crime family is the youngest of the five that dominated organized crime activities in New York City, United States, within the criminal organization known as the Mafia. Make no mistake, just because they're the youngest of the five families does not mean they are any less bad. With dealings into arms trafficking, arson, and all the rest, they ran the streets among many neighborhoods in New York City and Long Island.

Gambino

The family was founded by Salvatore "Toto" D'Aquila, who took over a gang of newly transplanted Mafiosi from Sicily around 1910. Though, in October of 1928 D'Aquila was murdered outside his home by a rival gang hitmen. From that point forward the crime family would experience many switches of power in the years to come. After D'Aquila the new boss was Alfred Mineo. Then Mineo was shot shortly after in 1930.

Genovese

The Genovese family operates mainly in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and New Jersey. They are generally part of the "liberal-American" faction and want to push for narcotics trafficking being allowed by the Commission.

Lucchese

The Lucchese crime family is one of the "Five Families" that dominate organized crime activities in New York City, United States, within the nationwide criminal phenomenon known as the Mafia. The family originated in the early 1920s with Gaetano Reina serving as boss up until his murder in 1930.

Focus on Economics at the Center of Crime

At its core, the Mafia is an organization created to make money, mostly through illegal means. The blanket term for those illegal means is racketeering. This includes extortion, theft, fraud, drug trafficking, and murder. A common scheme used to muscle money out of business owners is a protection racket where mafiosi offer to “protect” a business from illegal activity. If the owner refuses, soldiers are ordered to harass the business in various ways until they pay up: damaging property, scaring customers, etc.

But the infamy of the Mafia stems not from simple rackets that could be pulled off by any street gang. Rather, La Cosa Nostra is distinguished in organized crime for the depth with which it was able to infiltrate and influence legitimate elements of civil society in the United States, elements like various worker unions and Congress itself. For example, the Mafia could threaten construction companies with halting their projects by starting strikes among their workers using their connections with the unions. In fact, at the organization’s height, no construction project in New York City could be undertaken without cutting out a portion of the money made from the contract for the families.

One thing that is of crucial note is that up to the point in which our committee starts, U.S. law enforcement has done very little regarding the mafia except by allowing it to exploit the looseness of prohibition laws to make money. However, it seems as though with the end of prohibition nearing (Cough...hint...cough), the mafia may need to find a new way to return a large percentage of their money and influence.





Timeline

Late 1800s - Early 1900s: Black Hand gangs nationwide target poor immigrant ghettos and slums to recruit Italian-American youth for extortion practices. In New York City, the Five Points gang gains power under Italian immigrant Paul Kelly and provides a starting platform for young and notorious gangsters like Lucky Luciano and Al Capone.

January 1920: Nationwide Prohibition begins but is weakly enforced creating opportunities for bootlegging and extortion by criminal gangs in New York City.

1920s -1930s: The rise of Benito Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy places mounting criminal pressure on the Sicilian mafia, leading to a wave of mafioso immigration to the United States—including would-be family bosses Carlo Gambino and Joseph Bonanno.

1928 - 1931: Castellammarese War fought between two primary factions of Italian-American organized crime in New York, led by Joseph Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano.

April 1931: Masseria is murdered following collusion between one of his closest soldiers, Charles "Lucky" Luciano, and Salvatore Maranzano. Maranzano declares himself the "Boss of Bosses", sets up a new Mafia structure rooted in the five families, and creates the code of conduct for "La Cosa Nostra".

September 1931: Maranzano is murdered on a hit ordered by Luciano. Luciano, considered the father of the modern Mafia, becomes the nation's most powerful mob boss, using his power to set up the "Commission" to govern operations by La Cosa Nostra.

December 31st (11:59 PM), 1931: TBD...





Character List

Note to Delegates: Some of your characters, will not come up with much information on a google search because of their exclusivity and loyalty to the mafia (and some of the positions - boss and underboss and caporegime - have shifted so go by what is on the background guide). Due to this, I decided to modify the list of members and grant additional specific portfolio powers to certain roles that were not present in the five families. In addition to what's listed, feel free to use your character's background, opinions, motives, and personality to make your crisis plans imaginative and interesting, but do not forget that everything that happens in our room should be within the realm of feasibility. And a word of advice: read everyone's character description before you get to committee!

Bonanno:

Joseph “Don Peppino” Bonanno- Joey is the boss of the Lucchese family and holds immense sway over its members, being well-liked by all his men. He valued the Mafia for its tradition and honor, seeing as more than just a vehicle for making money, going so far as to live in a modest house and eschewing expensive tastes. Thus, he does not support the liberal reforms.

Natale “Joe Diamonds” Evola- Diamonds is a caporegime of the Bonanno family, overseeing some of their members and a close friend and confidant to Joseph Bonanno. He is generally seen as a successor to him if he were to die or step down. He supports his family's desire to maintain the honor of the Mafia, but is also intensely interested in making money from narcotics trafficking.

Giovanni “John” Bonventre- is the underboss of the Lucchese family and, therefore, runs the day-to-day operations of the gang, forming close relationships with the hundreds of the gang's members and an intimidating presence. He is seen as a paternal figure for the Commission, giving him great influence. He is a member of the old guard and values the Mafia for its secrets and honor more than for making money, opposing the liberal reforms.

Anthony “Tony” Riela- Tony is a leader of a faction of the Bonanno family, holding strong sway over the small group of men he oversees. Formerly from Illinois, he is mainly loyal to Joseph Bonanno, but his main ambition is power for himself and his gang. He has contacts within the New York City government, including police commissioner Stephen Kennedy.

Frank “Frankie” Garofalo- Frankie is a close friend to Joey Bonanno, but rumor has it they were in a dispute recently and their may be some unsettled turmoil. Frankie has his own group of very close and well trained associates within the Bonanno family, and also has ties to some of the other families within New York, which is somewhat uncharacteristic of the Five Families at this time period.



Colombo:

Joseph “Don Joe” Profaci- Don Joe is the boss of the Profaci family and holds immense sway over its members, and is also good friends and close allies with Joseph Bonanno. Born in Sicily, he valued the Mafia for its tradition and honor, seeing as more than just a vehicle for making money; thus, he does not support the liberal reforms. He was also a devout Catholic, with many Catholics in New York City, including those in rival gangs, looking up to him.

Salvatore “Sam” Profaci- The brother of Don Joe, Salvatore Profaci would never consider double-crossing his brother. Family is the most important thing for Sam, and if he was to rise to the top it would have to be because the Colombo family rose or an accident happened to Don Joe. He is the consigliere of the Profaci family, making him the closest advisor to the boss. He is generally well-liked among the men of his gang and is always looking for a way to make money. Thus, he likes the liberal reforms, but his place in the family rests on his loyalty to Profaci, who is very against them.

Joseph “Evil Eye” Magliocco- Evil Eye is one of the few highly-ranked officials within the families that has a knack for both leadership and killing. His goal is to not only rise to the top of the Colombo family, but to become the greatest leader there ever was. He’ll do absolutely whatever it takes, including backstabbing his closest associates. Don’t get too close to Joey Magliocco or you may get hurt. He has been linked to a couple of crucial Mafia deaths, giving him contacts to many hitmen.

Carlaggero "Charles the Sidge" LoCicero an important member of the Profaci family, and he is generally well-liked among the men of his gang and is always looking for a way to make money. He’s engaged in money forms of trafficking, and will do anything for a buck. Additionally, his twin cousins that he’s extremely close with serve pretty important roles in his life. Joey is a high ranking military official, while Zoey is one of the most influential women in government.

Gambino:

Vincent “Don Vincent” Mangano- Don Vincent is the boss of the Gambino family and holds immense sway over its members. He also controls the hundreds of men in the Gambino gang. He has risen through the ranks and is secretly looking for more power. He has allied himself to the liberal faction but does not really believe in the reforms they want; however, he risks retaliation from other families, if he comes out against them.

Philip “Phil” Mangano- Phil is the brother of Don Vincent, and currently serves as caporegime under him. Mangano is involved with the International Longshoremen's Association and in New York City politics, and wants to be the most influential non-politician in politics.

Joseph "Piney" Armone- Piney is the underboss of the Gambino family, and he was born in America and does not see the problem in allowing drug trafficking and other unethical trades. Also, he oversees some of their members and in charge of the family’s loansharking and stock market racketeering; he the family’s largest earner and has gained both a fortune and much respect from it.

Paul “Big Paul” Castellano a rising member of the Gambino family and has a ton of clout with the younger members of the family. He has close relationships with the hundreds of the gang’s members and an intimidating presence. He was born in America and does not see the problem in allowing drug trafficking and other unethical trades.



Genovese:

Charles “Lucky” Luciano- Charles Luciano, known as "Lucky Luciano," is an influential Italian-born mobster, criminal mastermind, and crime boss who operates mainly in the United States. Luciano is considered the father of modern organized crime in the United States for the establishment of the first Commission. He currently serves as chairman of the commission. Most influential man in all of the Five Families.

Vito “V” Genovese- Vito is the underboss of the Genovese family and holds immense sway over its members and will not tolerate dissidence in his own family. He also controls the hundreds of men in the Genovese gang. He is dead set on gaining the chairmanship of the Commission and expanding its power. He is also a staunch supporter of the liberal reforms, wanting to be able to deal in more unethical trades, such as drug trafficking and prostitution.

Frank “The Prime Minister” Costello- The Prime Minister is an Italian-American Mafia gangster and crime legend. Costello rose to the top of American organized crime, controls a vast gambling empire, and enjoys heavy political influence. He serves as caporegime to the Genovese family.

Gerardo “Jerry” Catena - Jerry is a crucial member of the Genovese family, and he has close relationships with the hundreds of the gang’s members along with a fortune from investing in a slot machine company. He has risen through the ranks and wants to continue to do so. He was born in New Jersey and intensely wants to enact the reforms of the “liberal-American faction” in order to enrich himself.

Michele “Big Mike” Miranda is a member of the Genovese family, and happens to be the closest advisor to the boss. He was formerly an “enforcer,” giving him close contacts to many hitmen. Though a part of liberal Genovese’s family, he does not deal in drugs.

Lucchese:

Tommy “Don Tommy” Gagliano- Tommy is the boss of the Lucchese family, but unlike his fellow bosses of the families, he has less control over his family. There seems to be a lot of uproar within the family, and Tommy just may lose his Don status. However, Don Tommy has connections within all of New York City and still has much support within his family as well as a major fortune. As 1932 approaches it could either be a year for Don Tommy to remember or forget.

Gaetano “Tommy” Lucchese- Tommy is the underboss of the Lucchese family and holds immense sway over its members, being well-liked by all his men. He has many contacts in the New York City government, including former Mayors William O’Dwyer and Vincent Impellitteri. His main focus is making money and he has allied himself to the liberal faction in order to do so. It also seems like there may be a power struggle between him and the current boss, Tommy Gagliano for the throne of the Lucchese family.

Stefano “Steve” Rondelli- Steve is the consigliere of the Lucchese family, making him the closest advisor to the Thomas Lucchese. He is generally well-liked among the men of his gang and is seen as a successor to Lucchese if he were to die or step down. His main trade is lathing and he is most definitely against drug dealing.

Vincenzo “Vinny” Rao- Vinny is a prominent member of the Lucchese family with operations in East Harlem, the Bronx and Westchester County. A prominent figure in illicit gambling (although he’s no PM), money laundering, labor unions, and real estate, Vinny has become notorious in his short time in the United States. His many plots of land and real estate across the tri-state area have earned him a great degree of wealth. Additionally, his influence over the local unions have granted him a certain level of political influence.



A Word of Advice

Hello all,

If you made it this far, I'm sure you're very hyped for the weekend and excited to dive into the five families. I wanted to give you guys a heads-up on my expectations, the things I live and die by in a crisis room, and the path to a gavel.

1. Never stop writing. If you're placard is in the air for a motion, you're other hand should either be writing a crisis note or a directive. It's during the times when it doesn't seem like a lot is going on that the back room should be filled with ideas, and the more notes you send the more likely your ideas are to pass.
2. Make your crisis notes detailed and specific. The more specific the better. I don't want to receive messages like, "Kill Don Joe and acquire his fortune and status." I want detailed notes on how you plan to do this, the reasoning, and next steps. Any detailed missing could allow me to twist your plan in the direction not desired, so be specific: especially on major points within your arc.
3. Have substance. No 30 second speeches with 25 seconds of nonsense. I want actual plans and ideas, and I've told my chairs and those in room to take note of that
4. Don't just go around killing each other - the mafia is about a lot more than that and it's not the intended direction of the room. Embezzle, work, and win. Sometimes killing may be accepted as a dire measure or if it's a well thought out idea, but a lazy death note won't get you anywhere.
5. Have fun! At the end of the day, Model UN and this weekend is about having fun. So enjoy it.