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Fagidaboudit: The American Dream and Italian-American Gangster Movies

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Date

2005-08-15

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Type of Degree

Thesis

Department

Communication and Journalism

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Abstract

This thesis answers the question, how have both aspects of the American Dream myth been presented in the gangster films and how has the American Dream in gangster films changed in recent years? As Italians immigrated to the United States, the Mafia system involving organized crime followed. As a result, movies based on real news headlines emerged, thus creating the gangster genre. Movies have great cultural value and

communicate a society's myths, values, and beliefs. The American Dream is an important myth in American society and is frequently manifested in movies. The American Dream myth is clearly presented through the conventions of the genre and has not significantly changed in recent years. The genre's plot, setting, characters, themes, motifs, and props illustrate the gangster's drive to fulfill the materialistic and moralistic aspects of the American Dream myth. Ironically, however, the gangster never fully achieves the Dream because her or his drive for success leads her or him to neglect the moralistic aspect that is key to the myth, demonstrating that in order to reach the American Dream, a person must do so legitimately.

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