

George Mason University

Department of History & Art History

History 387/393 / Fall term 2017
Wednesdays, 4:30 - 7:10
Music/Theater Bldg # 1007

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HIROSHIMA AND ITS LEGACIES: COLD WAR AND NUCLEAR CULTURE

Overview:

Recalling the testing of the first atomic bomb in Alamogordo, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945, J. Robert Oppenheimer, the Director of the Los Alamos laboratory that produced the bomb, remarked:

We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried. Most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita...'I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.' I suppose we all thought that, one way or another.

The atomic bomb changed the world forever. Through an exploration of history, literature, photographs, film, the popular press, and documentaries, this historically oriented interdisciplinary course will consider the lasting political, social, cultural, scientific, and ethical legacies of that event.

The course will begin with an investigation of the situation in 1945. The decision to use atomic bombs against urban targets will receive considerable attention and will be the subject of many readings and discussions. The course will also investigate the many legacies that followed from that decision including “Massive Retaliation and deterrence theory,” the Cuban Missile Crisis and even the current missile crisis with North Korea. They are all legacies of Hiroshima.

It is my intention to conduct our course as flexibly and interactively as possible. The schedule below is therefore a general overview of the course rather than a rigid outline. It will be altered if there are more interesting issues to discuss.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Perfect (or at least near-perfected) attendance is required. A single class each week in which we will discuss readings, view films, and raise essential questions only makes sense if everyone participates.
2. Two essays (about 1,800 words, 8 double spaced pages) will be assigned. The first is due on October 11. The second essay is due on December 8. Each essay will be emailed as an attachment to me.
3. Presentations on selected topics for extra credit. (Details TK)

Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate broad knowledge of historical events and periods and their significance.
2. Explain and critique the historical schools of thought that have shaped scholarly understanding of their fields of study.
3. Skills of critical analysis, including formulating persuasive arguments, evaluating evidence and critiquing claims in the literature, and interpreting a variety of primary sources.
4. Organize and express your thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally.
5. Demonstrate mastery of historical practice and research.

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING EMAILS: ALWAYS WRITE H387F17 or H393F17 in the subject line when you send me an email. IF YOU INCLUDE AN ATTACHMENT IT SHOULD BE LABELED H387F17_YOUR NAME (or H393F17_YOUR NAME). I receive many emails daily and I am likely to miss yours if you do not use the markers mentioned above. (I will explain further in class.)

Grading:

First paper: 40%

Second paper: 40%

Class participation and attendance 20%

Project presentations: voluntary for extra credit (equal to a paper — details TK)

Assigned Readings:

(Additional readings — articles — will be distributed throughout the semester)

Sherwin, Martin J., *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and Its Legacies*

Hersey, John. *Hiroshima*
Ibuse, Masuji, *Black Rain*
Powaski, Ronald, *March to Armageddon: The U.S. and the Nuclear Arms Race*.
Vonnegut, Kurt., *Cat's Cradle*
Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*
Kennedy, Robert, *The Thirteen Days*

SCHEDULE:

8/30 INTRODUCTION: NUCLEAR WEAPONS THEN AND NOW

HIROSHIMA - THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS - THE NORTH KOREAN MISSILE CRISIS

Read before class:

<https://www.thenation.com/article/what-the-cuban-missile-crisis-can-teach-us-about-the-north-korean-missile-crisis/>

<https://www.thenation.com/article/this-is-whats-really-behind-north-koreas-nuclear-provocations/>

Films: “Nuclear Security” (Great Decisions) and “Victory in the Pacific” (American Experience, PBS)

PART I: WHY ATOMIC BOMBS WERE DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI AND HOW THAT EVENT HAS SHAPED THE HISTORY OF THE POST WAR WORLD.

9/6 BUILDING THE ATOMIC BOMB: THE ROOSEVELT YEARS,

Read: *A World Destroyed*: Skip introductions read pp. 13-140;
Appendices: A, B, C, D, E, H)

Film: “The Bomb” (PBS 2015, 110m)

9/13 DECISION TO USE THE ATOMIC BOMB: TRUMAN TAKES OVER

Read: *A World Destroyed*, pp. 141-248.
Appendices: I, J, O, Q, U

Film: “The Bomb, February to Sept 1945 (Part 24, “The World At War; Thames TV, UK, 1971, 60m)

9/20 HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI: — THE DEBATE, THEN AND NOW

Read:

1/ Henry L. Stimson, “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb”
<https://inf2149decisionmaking.wikispaces.com/file/view/Stimson+-+Harper+Feb+1947+-+Decision+to+Use+the+Atomic+Bomb.pdf>

2/ Paul Fussell, "Thank God For the Atomic Bomb"
<https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/iakh/HIS1300MET/v12/undervisningsmateriale/Fussel%20-%20thank%20god%20for%20the%20atom%20bomb.pdf>

3/ Martin J. Sherwin, "Hiroshima and Modern Memory" (A Response to Paul Fussell)
<http://thenation.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/hiroshimamemory1981.pdf>

Film: "Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped" (ABC, Peter Jennings, 1995, 90m)

9/27 THE POLITICS OF HISTORY AND MEMORY: THE 1994/95 ENOLA GAY CONTROVERSY AT THE SMITHSONIAN'S AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM.

Read:

1/ Mike Wallace, "The Battle of the Enola Gary"
<http://www.nathannewman.org/EDIN/.conv/.wallace.html>

2/ Read any 2 articles from *The Air Force Association Magazine*
<http://www.airforcemag.com/MagazineArchive/EnolaGayArchive/Pages/ArticlesandEditorials.aspx>

Film: Atomic Cafe (Kevin Rafferty, 1982, 90m)

10/4 JAPAN AND THE BOMB, I

Read:

John Hersey, *Hiroshima*
Ibuse, Masuji, *Black Rain*

Ward Wilson, "The Bomb Didn't Beat Japan. . . Stalin Did,"
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/05/30/the-bomb-didnt-beat-japan-stalin-did/>

Film: "The Bomb" (Chapter 3, The Untold History of the US, 2015, 60m)

PART II. SETTING THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS AGENDA: THE USA AND USSR, 1945-1962

10/11 SCIENTISTS, POLITICS AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Read: *Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle*

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0422.html> (J. Robert Oppenheimer Obituary)

<http://www.pulitzer.org/article/question-j-robert-oppenheimer-21st-century> (Kent Meyers review of *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*)

Film: "The Day After Trinity: Robert Oppenheimer and the Atomic Bomb" (Jon Else, 1981, 90m)

10/18 TRUMAN, AMERICA AND THE BOMB, 1945-1952

Reading: Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, chaps 3 & 4
Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, chaps 1-6

Film: "Radio Bikini" (Robert Stone, *et.al* 1988, 60 m)

10/25 STALIN AND THE BOMB

Reading: Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, chaps 7-11

Review of David Holloway's, *Stalin and the Bomb*:5

<http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/12/06/specials/holloway-stalin.html>

Film: "Igor Kurchatov: Stalin's Bomb Maker" (Kaufman & Sherwin, Oregon PBS, 60m)

11/1 EISENHOWER AND THE BOMB

Reading: Kaplan: *The Wizards of Armageddon* 12-19
Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, chaps 5 & 6

Film: Dr. Strange Love: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb

11/8 CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, I

Reading: Robert Kennedy, *The Thirteen Days* (complete)
Powaski, *March to Armageddon*, chap 7

Film: JFK October 22, 1962 Address to the Nation announcing CMC
Walter Cronkite CBS News Reports Oct 24, 26

11/15 CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, II

Reading: <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/fall/cuban-missiles.html> (Sherwin: "The Cuban Missile Crisis At 50," *Prologue Magazine*)

Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, chaps 20, 21

Film: The Missiles of October: What the World Didn't Know (ABC, Peter Jennings, 90m)

11/22 THANKSGIVING VACATION - NO CLASS - DRIVE SAFELY

11/29 TBA

Reading Assignments:

**12/6 LAST CLASS TBA
FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY 12/8**