

# George Mason University

## Department of History & Art History

History 387/393 / Fall term 2018  
TUESDAY: 4:30 - 7:10  
Planet 212

Professor Martin J. Sherwin,  
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# HIROSHIMA AND THE COLD WAR: THE MAKING OF OUR “END TIME” WORLD

## 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 bombings 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, the “almost abolition of nuclear weapons by Reagan and Gorbachev at Reykjavik, and the current nuclear crises with Iran and 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 expected. A single class each week in which we will discuss readings, view films, and raise essential questions only makes sense if everyone participates. I recognize that issues arise that make class attendance impossible. **If you cannot attend class you MUST SELF REPORT YOUR ABSENCE BY SENDING ME AN EMAIL BEFORE CLASS.** Failure to do so will result in a grade reduction.

2. Two essays (about 1,500 words, 6 double spaced pages) will be assigned. The first is due on October 16. The second essay is due on December 8. Each essay will be emailed to me as an attachment.
3. Powerpoint Presentations (with a written text) on related topics not covered in the course are an option for extra credit. **Your decision to participate in this option must be made by OCTOBER 16.** (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 H387F18 or H393F18 in the subject line when you send me an email. IF YOU INCLUDE AN ATTACHMENT IT SHOULD BE LABELED H387F18\_YOUR NAME (or H393F18\_YOUR NAME). Here's the reason: I receive many emails daily and when I am ready to read your papers I enter H387F18 and H393F18 in my search box and download your papers. I am likely to miss yours if you do not use the markers mentioned above. Do Not use Hist; just H.**

#### **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)

Adelman, Kenneth, *Reagan at Reykjavik* (HarperCollins)

Dobbs, Michael, *One Minute to Midnight* (Vintage)

Ellsberg, Daniel *The Doomsday Machine* (Bloomsbury)  
Hersey, John. *Hiroshima* (Vintage)  
McMillan, Priscilla., *The Ruin of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (Hopkins)  
Sherwin, Martin J., *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and Its Legacies* (Stanford)

**AN EXPLANATION OF THE SCHEDULE:** *Note that the Hiroshima topics are scheduled throughout the semester rather than during the first weeks of the course, as you might expect. The reason is my contention that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain the epicenter of the nuclear age effecting the actions of those who value nuclear weapons as well as those who seek their abolition. Every nuclear topic embodies some component of the events of August 6 and 9, 1945.*

## **PART I: WHY ATOMIC BOMBS WERE DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI.**

### **8/28 INTRODUCTION:**

#### **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/>

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

**Film:** War and Peace in the Nuclear Age, Part I

### **9/4 BUILDING THE ATOMIC BOMB: From ROOSEVELT to TRUMAN,**

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

**Film:** "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb" (NBC, 1965, 120 min)

**NOTE the evolution of interpretations of what motivated the atomic bombings in the 3 documentary films. The first in 1965, the second (British) in 1971 and the third in 1995.**

**9/11 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)

**9/18 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)

FIRST PAPER ASSIGNMENT EMAIL TO CLASS.

**9/25 SCIENTISTS, POLITICS AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

**Read:** McMillan, *The Ruin of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (complete)

<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)

**FIRST PAPER DUE MONDAY, OCT 1 @ 10 PM (EMAIL AS ATTACHMENT TO: [martysherwin@gmail.com](mailto:martysherwin@gmail.com) H387F18 or H393F18 in subject line ALSO your attachment: H387F18 or H393F18\_Your Name #1**

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

**10/2 TRUMAN-STALIN AND THE BOMB**

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

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

**Film:** "Igor Kurchatov: Stalin's Bomb Maker" (Kaufman & Sherwin, Oregon PBS, 60m) **or**  
"Cold War" (Untold History of the U.S., chap 4, 2016, 55 min.)

**10/9 NO CLASS — MONDAY CLASSES MEET ON TUESDAY**

**10/16 EISENHOWER AND THE BOMB**

**Reading:** Ellsberg, *The Doomsday Machine*, (chaps 1-6)

**Film:** "The '50s: Eisenhower, the Bomb, and the Third World," ([Untold History of the U.S.](#); chap 5)

**10/23 CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, I**

**Reading:** Ellsberg, *The Doomsday Machine* (Chaps 7-13) + (Sherwin: "The Cuban Missile Crisis At 50," *Prologue Magazine*) accessed at: <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/fall/cuban-missiles.html>

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

## **10/30 CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, II**

**Read:** Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight* complete

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

## **PART II. HISTORY AND MEMORY:**

### **11/6 THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AT THE SMITHSONIAN'S AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM: THE ENOLA GAY CONTROVERSY, 1994-95**

**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* on the Enola Gay Controversy

<http://www.airforcemag.com/MagazineArchive/EnolaGayArchive/Pages/ArticlesandEditorials.aspx>

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

### **11/13 JAPAN AND THE BOMB** (Guest speaker, Professor Brian Platt, Chair Department of History and Art History, GMU)

**Read:** John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

**Film:** Godzilla (Original Japanese version, Japan 1954)

### **11/20 RESEARCH WEEK — FINAL ASSIGNMENT EMAILED TO CLASS**

**11/27    NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE DANGEROUS AND USELESS:  
REAGAN AND GORBACHEV AT REYKJAVIK**

**Read:** Ken Adelman: *Reagan At Reykjavik* (complete)

**Film:** “Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb.” (Stanley Kubrick, 1963). The classic feature film of the nuclear age.

**12/4    TK**

**12/8    FINAL PAPER DUE SATURDAY 12/8**