

Nuclear Weapons and American Democracy, 1945-present

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American University, summer 2004
Tuesday and Thursday, 5:30-8:00 PM
Course #s SIS-051-N20;SIS-396-N20;SIS-603-N20
Room: Ward 6

Course Description:

This course looks at critical moments in the history of developing nuclear weapons and attempts to control or eliminate them from the earliest secret decisions by a handful of political, military, and scientific leaders to broad public debates in recent years. The course will examine government control of information about the Bomb and the construction of long-lasting myths about the necessity, efficacy, and safety of nuclear weapons and their production alongside citizen efforts to challenge official perspectives.

This course will stress the importance of an historical understanding of nuclear weapons development and policy and citizen involvement in democratic decision-making. Topics include the decision to build and use the first atomic bombs and early dissents from those decisions; the decision to build the "Super" or hydrogen bomb and the failure of dissenting voices; the history of nuclear weapons production and testing and efforts to stop it; the Cuban Missile Crisis; the development of modern, complex strategic weapons and the growth of a broad citizen's movement for disarmament and peace; and contemporary public and policy debates about nuclear weapons including the Bush Administration.

Guest lecturers with special expertise and experience in selected topics have been invited to address the class.

Course requirements:

Regular attendance and active participation are required. Because this is a short, intense course with the presentation of original materials, ideas and experience, students must not miss class except for true emergencies. Grades will be based on two short papers (3-5 pp.) worth 40% of your grade and a final paper (6-10pp.) worth 45% of your grade. Class participation will count for 15% of the final grade. All students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of other opportunities offered by the Nuclear Studies Institute such as films being shown on nuclear culture.

Required texts:

Lawrence S. Wittner, *Toward Abolition: A History of the World Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present*, Stanford University Press, 2003, paperback.

Martin Butcher, *What Wrongs Our Arms May Do: The Role of Nuclear Weapons in Counterproliferation*, Physicians for Social Responsibility, 2003.

Additional required readings:

Alperovitz, Gar, "The Myth" from *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*
Bird, Kai and Lawrence Lifschulz, "The Legend of Hiroshima," Introduction to *Hiroshima's Shadow*

Brenner, Philip and James G. Blight, chapter one, "The October Crisis" from *Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba's Struggle with the Superpowers After the Cuban Missile Crisis*
Cortright, David, Chapters 2, "The Nuclear Freeze" and 3, "Prevention" from *Peace Works: The Citizen's Role in Ending the Cold War*

Kuznick, Peter J. "He 'Never Lost Any Sleep': Coping With Truman's Nightmarish Nuclear Legacy," *Radical History Review*

Musil, Robert K., "Teaching in the Nuclear Age," *Teachers' College Record*

Musil, Robert K., "Kennedy, Clinton, and the Test Ban," *PSR Quarterly*

Musil and Daniel Ellsberg, "Ending the Nuclear Age: The Manhattan Project II," *PSR Quarterly*

Wittner, Lawrence S., "America's Nuclear Nightmare" from *One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, through 1953*

Course Outline:

June 29 Introduction: Nuclear Weapons and Democracy: Issues and Options

Film: "The Decision to Drop the Bomb" (ABC-TV News); read Kuznick, Bird, Alperovitz, Wittner through 1953.

July 1 Guest Lecture: Peter Kuznick. Discussion.

July 6 The H-Bomb, Nuclear Testing, Early Disarmament Movement

Film: "Atomic Café" Read Brenner, Musil

July 8 Film: "Countdown to October" Japanese TV: Guest Lecture, Philip Brenner. Read Wittner, chaps. 2, 4, 9

July 13 The Nuclear Arms Race and Arms Control. Read Cortright and Wittner, chap. 16

July 15 The 1980s Disarmament Movement and the Reagan Administration; Read Musil and Wittner, chap. 17

July 20 The Clinton Administration and NPT and CTBT. Guest speaker Ambassador Thomas Graham (invited). Read Butcher and Wittner, chap. 19

July 22 The Bush Administration and New Nuclear Doctrine. Guest speaker, Martin Butcher.

July 27 The SMART Security Campaign. Guest speaker, Ira Shorr

July 29 Conclusions. Public lecture, Robert McNamara (invited)