

The Nuclear Age (17780)

HIST 33205

Term: Fall 2024

Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 3pm–4:15pm

Location: Wilmeth Active Learning Center (WALC) 1087, Purdue University

Instructor: Austin R. Cooper, PhD // cooperar@purdue.edu

Office hours: BRNG 6132, Tuesday, 4:30pm–5:30pm, and by appointment.

How did the invention of nuclear weapons and their use as an act of war in 1945 change military strategy, international diplomacy, and world politics? This course surveys historical efforts to understand and to navigate these changes at national, regional, and global scales. At the same time, it examines the development of nuclear energy and its complex relationship with nuclear weapons. How have policymakers weighed the benefits and risks of this form of electricity generation? How do these trade-offs look today facing climate change and nuclear proliferation risks? The course offers a global retrospective of the nuclear age and its uneven impacts from North America and Europe to Asia and Africa. Topics include fission research, the Cold War arms race, weapons testing and radiation exposure, nonproliferation and arms control, nuclear deterrence, accidents and close-calls, and disarmament efforts.

Students will gain familiarity with:

1. Historical and policy debates surrounding nuclear technologies, including military and energy applications;
2. Recent interdisciplinary scholarship and classic texts on the nuclear age;
3. Use of primary sources for historical research and historical writing;
4. Formulation of policy-relevant arguments in response to paper prompts and exam questions about the nuclear age.

Required Texts

1. Masuji Ibuse, *Black Rain*, trans. John Bester (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2012 [1969]).
2. *Command and Control*, dir. Robert Kenner (PBS, 2016).

All other texts available online using the Library Reading List tool on Brightspace.

Assignments and Weighting

1. Response paper (600–700 words) on Ibuse’s *Black Rain*, due 9am August 29, 10% of final grade;
2. Quiz, in class using Blue Books, September 17, 10%;
3. Midterm exam, in class using Blue Books, October 1, 20%;
4. Primary-source-based paper (1,100–1,300 words) on nonproliferation, using Wilson Center online document collection, “U.S. Secret Assistance to the French Nuclear Program, 1969-1975: From ‘Fourth Country’ to Strategic Partner,” due 9am October 25, 20%;
5. Response paper (600–700 words) on Kenner’s *Command and Control*, due 9am November 8, 10%;
6. Quiz, in class using Blue Books, November 14, 10%;
7. Final exam, in person using Blue Books, December 9–14, 20%.

Unless done in class or otherwise in person, assignments are to be submitted using Brightspace. Each student is responsible for bringing their own Blue Book(s) to class when required for in-class assessments. Blue Books are available for purchase at University Bookstore (360 W. State St.) or Follett's Purdue West Bookstore (1265 W. State St.).

Grading Scale

A+: exceptional work

A: 93 or higher

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D: 66-69

F: 65 or lower

Grades do not round up.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is essential to success in this course. The course readings and lectures complement each other but are not interchangeable. Exams will almost certainly cover topics and questions that we discuss extensively in class but that the readings address only briefly, if at all.

This course follows the University Academic Regulations regarding class attendance, which state that students are expected to be present for every meeting of the classes in which they are enrolled. Students should request notes from their peers in the event of an absence. Please do not come to class if you are feeling ill.

Late Work

Without written authorization from the instructor, student work forfeits the equivalent of one full letter grade (e.g., A work automatically becomes B work) for each day it is late. Work submitted more than 4 days late without this written authorization will receive a failing grade and will not otherwise be graded.

Students should request extensions in writing at least 72 hours before the assignment deadline, no matter the circumstances. When conflicts can be anticipated, such as for many University-sponsored activities and religious observations, you should inform me of the situation as far in advance as possible. For cases that fall under excused absence regulations, you or your representative should contact or go to the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) website to complete appropriate forms for instructor notification. Under academic regulations, excused absences may be granted by ODOS for cases of grief/bereavement, military service, jury duty, parenting leave, or emergent medical care. The processes are detailed, so plan ahead.

For unanticipated or emergency circumstances when advance notification is not possible, contact me as soon as possible by email. These emergencies may require documentation. Extensions not covered by the excused absence or emergency policies will be granted at the instructor's discretion.

Regarding make-up quizzes and exams, or any other in-class assignment, please contact me by email as far in advance as possible.

Academic Integrity

I encourage students to study together and otherwise discuss the course materials, but all written assignments should reflect only each student's own work that they have completed independently. Attempts to pass off another's words as your own – be it on an in-class exam or a course paper written outside class time – will carry harsh penalties. Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed by the instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment and at the instructor's discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered. The "University Regulations" handbook contains further information on dishonesty. Please make sure that you are familiar with Purdue's academic integrity policies, available on the Brightspace course site.

Generative AI / Large Language Models Policy

Chatbot use is forbidden: Submitting AI-generated writing or research as your own is academic dishonesty and carries the same penalties as plagiarism. If any portion of your assignment was generated by a chatbot, you are in violation of the academic integrity expectations of this course and the university. Your case will be reported to OSRR for further review of your status at this university.

References and Citations

Assignments for this class require citations complying with the Chicago Manual of Style Notes and Bibliography system. The Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition) is available online using the Purdue University Libraries site. The Purdue Online Writing Lab offers a brief overview of Chicago Style:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmoss_formatting_and_style_guide/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html.

Recording Policy

Course lectures and discussions may not be recorded using audio or video without written permission from the instructor.

Technology Policy

I encourage students to consider dedicating a notebook to this course and taking notes by hand in it during class and while reading. Students may instead use their electronic devices for this purpose during class they if prefer. Please do your very best to limit class-time uses of electronic devices to course purposes only. Other class-time uses of these devices distract not only you but

also those around you. Please silence all ringers and other notifications during class. Repeated distraction of yourself and/or others by your electronic devices may result in a request from the instructor for you to stop using these devices and to switch to paper.

Reading Instructions

Please read each assigned text in advance of the paired class session (e.g., read Sime’s “Politics of Forgetting” prior to class on August 22). Consider making brief notes about each assigned text. Perhaps summarize in a few phrases the main point, supporting claims, and key evidence.

Course Schedule

Tuesday, August 20, 2024

Orientation, introductions, Q&A

Part 1: World War

Thursday, August 22, 2024

Fission Research

Ruth L. Sime, “The Politics of Forgetting: Otto Hahn and the German Nuclear-Fission Project in World War II,” *Phys. Perspect.* 14 (2012): 59–94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00016-011-0065-6>.

Tuesday, August 27, 2024

“The Decision”

J. Samuel Walker, “Recent Literature on Truman’s Atomic Bomb Decision: The Triumph of the Middle Ground?” in *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, ed. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 83–104.

Thursday, August 29, 2024

Hiroshima

Ibuse, *Black Rain*.

Part 2: Cold War

Tuesday, September 3, 2024

Oppenheimer, “International Control,” and the “Super”

Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (New York: Vintage, 2006), ch. 24–26, 30–31.

Thursday, September 5, 2024

Arms Race

David Holloway, “Racing toward Armageddon? Soviet Views of Strategic Nuclear War, 1955–1972,” in *The Age of Hiroshima*, ed. Michael D. Gordin and G. John Ikenberry (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 71–88.

Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Making a Nuclear Alliance

J. Michael Legge, “Theater Nuclear Weapons and the NATO Strategy of Flexible Response,” RAND (April 1983): v–xiii, 1–16. (Feel free to read the rest of it, just for fun.)

Thursday, September 12, 2024

“Too Cheap to Meter?”

Mar Rubio-Varas, “The Changing Economic Context Influencing Nuclear Decisions,” in *Engaging the Atom: The History of Nuclear Energy and Society in Europe from the 1950s to the Present*, ed. Arne Kaijser et al. (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2021), 52–80.

Part 3: “Nuclear Imperialism”

Tuesday, September 17, 2024

Near-Use, Non-Use

Matthew Jones, *After Hiroshima: The United States, Race, and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945–1965* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ch. 2–4.

Thursday, September 19, 2024

Atoms for Peace

Gisela Mateos and Edna Suárez-Díaz, “Atoms for Peace in Latin America,” in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History* (2016)

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.317>.

Tuesday, September 24, 2024

Fallout

Toshihiro Higuchi, *Political Fallout: Nuclear Weapons Testing and the Making of a Global Environmental Crisis* (Stanford University Press, 2020), ch. 2 (“Atomic-Bomb Tuna”).

Thursday, September 26, 2024

Test Ban

Itty Abraham, “Decolonizing Arms Control: The Asian African Legal Consultative Committee and the Legality of Nuclear Testing, 1960–64,” *Asian Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 3 (September 2018): 314–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2018.1485588>.

Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Midterm Exam

Part 4: Nonproliferation and Arms Control

Thursday, October 3, 2024

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones

Jonathan R. Hunt, *The Nuclear Club: How America and the World Policed the Atom from Hiroshima to Vietnam* (Stanford University Press, 2022), ch. 7 (Tlatelolco).

Tuesday, October 8, 2024

NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Thursday, October 10, 2024

The NPT and the IAEA

Elisabeth Roehrllich, *Inspectors for Peace: A History of the International Atomic Energy Agency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022), ch. 5–6.

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

NO CLASS – ARC conference travel

***Work on primary-source papers using this Wilson Center document collection: William Burr, “U.S. Secret Assistance to the French Nuclear Program, 1969-1975: From ‘Fourth Country’ to Strategic Partner,” <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/us-secret-assistance-to-the-french-nuclear-program-1969-1975-fourth-country-to-strategic>.

Thursday, October 17, 2024

NO CLASS – ARC conference travel

***Work on primary-source papers using the Wilson Center document collection, “U.S. Secret Assistance to the French Nuclear Program, 1969-1975,” link above.

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

Strategic Arms Limitation

Susan Colbourn, *Euromissiles: The Nuclear Weapons That Nearly Destroyed NATO* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022), ch. 2 (“Parity’s Problems”).

Thursday, October 24, 2024

Oil Shock

Marino Auffant, “Oil for Atoms: The 1970s Energy Crisis and Nuclear Proliferation in the Persian Gulf,” *Texas National Security Review* 5, no. 3 (2022): 59–82.

<https://tnsr.org/2022/05/oil-for-atoms-the-1970s-energy-crisis-and-nuclear-proliferation-in-the-persian-gulf/>.

Part 5: Mutually-assured Destruction

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

The Nuclear Revolution

Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), ch. 1–2, 5–6.

Thursday, October 31, 2024

“Star Wars”

S. D. Drell, P. J. Farley, and D. Holloway, *The Reagan Strategic Defense Initiative: A Technical, Political, and Arms Control Assessment* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1985), 1–6, 64–79, 93–99.

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

From the Freeze to Reykjavik

Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed forces: the transnational movement to end the Cold War*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), ch. 14–15.

John Tirman, “How We Ended the Cold War,” *The Nation*, 1999,

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-we-ended-cold-war/> (optional).

Thursday, November 7, 2024

Damascus

NO CLASS (ARC conference travel)

***Watch: Kenner's *Command and Control*; and submit response paper using Brightspace.

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Chernobyl

William M. Knobloch, "Diplomatic Fallout: Nuclear Power and Cold War Diplomacy from Three Mile Island to Chernobyl," in *Making the Unseen Visible: Science and the Contested Histories of Radiation Exposure*, ed. J. D. Hamblin and L. M. Richards (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2023), 173–190.

Part 6: Disarmament?

Thursday, November 14, 2024

Apartheid's Bomb

A.-M. van Wyk and R. Möser, "1989 in South(ern) Africa: The Fall of the Nuclear Wall," *Comparativ* 29, no. 5 (2019), 45–61, <https://doi.org/10.26014/j.comp.2019.05.03>.

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Soviet Collapse

Mariana Budjeryn, "Non-Proliferation and State Succession: The Demise of the USSR and the Nuclear Aftermath in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 24, no. 2 (2022): 46–94, https://doi.org/10.1162/jews_a_01077.

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Iraq and Iran

Hans Blix, "Verification of nuclear nonproliferation: The lesson of Iraq," *Washington Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1992): 57–65.

David Hastings Dunn, "'Real Men Want to Go to Tehran': Bush, Preemption and the Iranian Nuclear Challenge," *International Affairs* (Jan 2007): 19–38.

Tuesday, November 26, 2024

NO CLASS – Thanksgiving

Thursday, November 28, 2024

NO CLASS – Thanksgiving

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

Arms Control and/or Disarmament Today

Rebecca Davis Gibbons, "The humanitarian turn in nuclear disarmament and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," *Nonproliferation Review* 25, no. 1–2 (2018): 11–36. DOI: 10.1080/10736700.2018.1486960.

***Listen to the podcast by Annelise Riles with Beatrice Fihn, "Working to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons," *Breaking Boundaries: A podcast from Northwestern University's Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs* (June 29, 2023),

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/northwestern-buffett-inst8/episodes/Working-to-Eliminate-Nuclear-Weapons-with-Beatrice-Fihn-e2lit7k/a-abdf30>.

Thursday, December 5, 2024

The “Two Near-Peer” Question

Linde Desmaele, “US Security Assurances and Nuclear Tripolarity,” *Survival* 66, no. 2 (2024): 143–156, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2024.2332066

***Listen to the podcast by Ella Weber, “How did Nuclear Weapons Get on my Reservation?” *Scientific American* (November 14, 2023),

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/podcast/episode/how-did-nuclear-weapons-get-on-my-reservation1/>.

December 9–14: Final Exam; bring Blue Books!

Email Policy

Outside of class or office hours, communicate with your instructor by email. Include the course title and state the reason for your email in the subject line (e.g., “HIST 33205 - question about midterm exam”). Please make your message concise and clear. I will usually respond to your emails during the workday within 24 hours, except on the weekend.

Students with Disabilities

Purdue University is committed to providing equal access and equal opportunity to university courses, activities, and programs for students with disabilities. As your instructor, I take this responsibility very seriously. Students with documented disabilities that substantially limit a major life activity, such as learning, walking, or seeing, may qualify for academic adjustments and/or services. If you have a disability that requires special academic accommodation, please make an appointment to speak with me within the first three weeks of the semester in order to discuss any adjustments. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the Disability Resource Center of any impairment/condition that may require accommodations and/or classroom modifications. To request information about academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, or services, please contact the Disability Resource Center in the Office of the Dean of Students, 830 Young Hall, (765) 494-1247 (V/TTY), drc@purdue.edu.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Please review the University Nondiscrimination Policy Statement on the Brightspace course site.

Violent Behavior Policy

Please review the University Violent Behavior Policy Statement on the Brightspace course site.

Emergency Preparedness Policy

Please review the University Emergency Procedures Guide linked on the Brightspace course site.

Disclaimer

In the event of a major emergency, the requirements, deadlines, and grading policies in this syllabus are subject to changes that may be required by a revised semester calendar. Any such

changes in this course will be posted, once the course resumes, on the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email or phone.