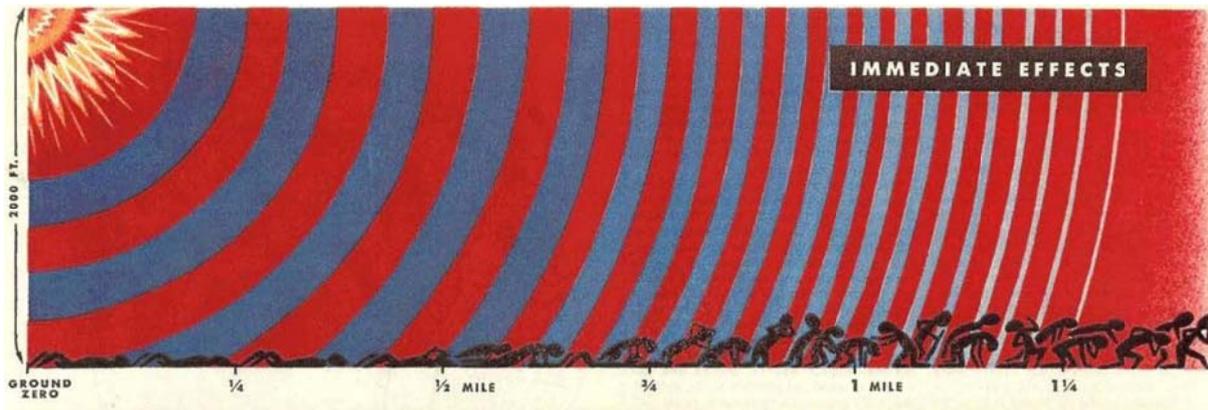


## BY THE BOMB'S EARLY LIGHT: ATOMIC AMERICA



Winter 2014-2015

Instructor: Dr. J. Jesse Ramírez

Office: IG 4.218

Email: ramirez@em.uni-frankfurt.de

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Between 1945, when the world's first atomic weapons were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and 1991, when the collapse of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War, the United States lived under a cloud of nuclear anxiety. This course studies the cultural history of atomic America through its political and intellectual history, literature, television, cinema, and music.

### MY POLICIES

I pride myself on being a fair, courteous, and dedicated teacher. I also have high expectations.

General Conduct: This course mixes lectures and class discussion. I expect all students to participate in discussion, and will periodically call on students who are not participating independently. Don't let anxieties about your English proficiency stop you from participating fully in class—especially if you're planning on becoming a teacher of English! The only way to improve is to practice.

Persistent chatting with neighbors, however, is rude and distracting, and will get you kicked out of class. A discrete whisper now and then is fine, whole conversations in private are not. If you have urgent news to tell your friends, do it before or after class. If you need to write an email or check Facebook, do it before or after class. Playing with your phone is an invitation for me to call on you and ask an embarrassingly difficult question. Don't take this class simply because it fits your schedule: you'll be bored, and I'll be bored with you.

Reading: You are responsible for completing the assigned readings *before* each class session. Bring the reading with you to class; showing up empty-handed suggests that you are unprepared. I strongly discourage reading on laptops and smart phones (ebook readers and tablets are okay). If you do not plan on buying or borrowing hard copies of the required texts (see below), you must first get my permission. If you feel the reading load is too heavy, don't simply skip it and show up to class anyway. Drop the class and take another one that suits your effort level.

Moreover, every week you are responsible for writing a short (max. one page) reading response. You will hand in these reading responses at the

beginning of every session. The purpose of the reading responses is twofold. First, they will prompt you to read *critically*. Reading simply to finish the assignment is not sufficient; rather, as university students, you must practice the ability to think critically about texts and to express your ideas in speech and writing. Second, I will use the reading responses to track attendance. If you don't submit a reading response, I will mark you absent.

NOTE: You'll notice that several readings are listed below as either "primary" or "secondary." "Primary" doesn't mean "more important," and "secondary" doesn't mean "less important." You are responsible for reading *all* the texts listed under each session. "Primary" and "secondary" refer to the *historical status of the respective texts*. A primary source is a text or other cultural artifact that was created during the period under examination and that we will use as historical evidence with which to understand that period. A secondary source is a piece of scholarship written by a historian or other cultural interpreter, and is not contemporary with the period under examination.

## TWO A-BOMBS BLAST U. S. CITY

UNDERWATER ATOMIC EXPLOSION AND AIR  
BURST WRECK COASTAL CITY. THOUSANDS  
KILLED, INJURED BY BURNS, RADIATION

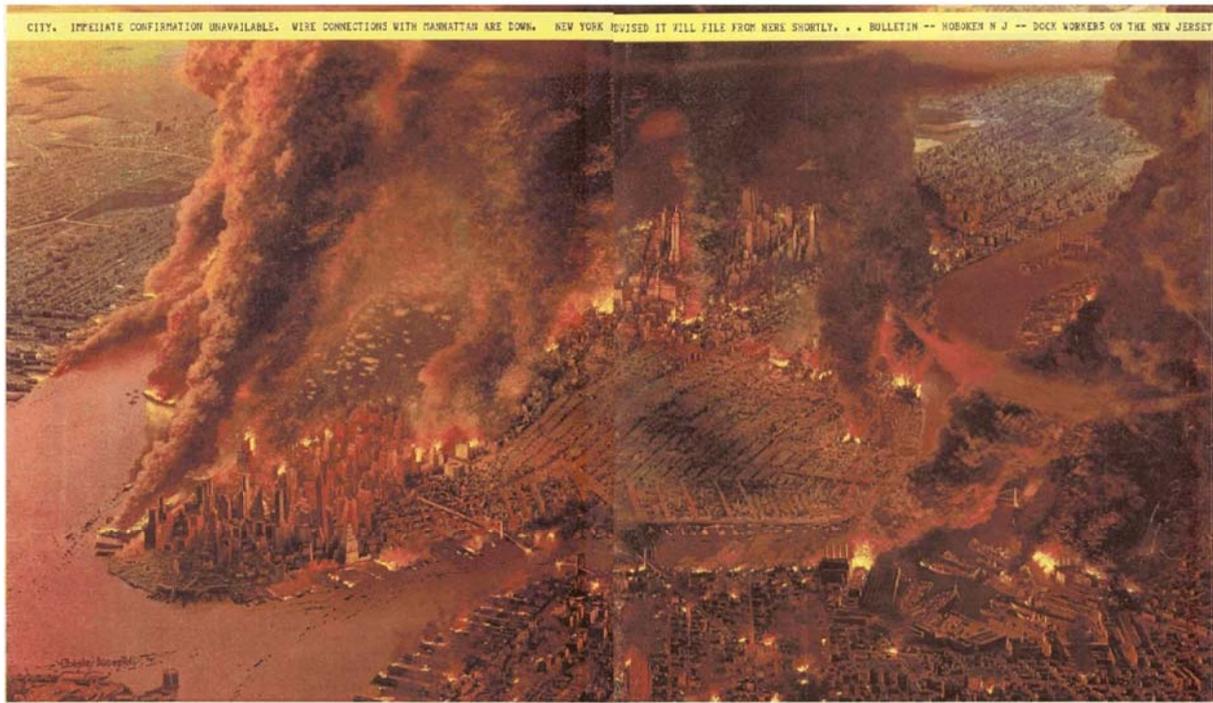


**EXODUS** Refugees pour from burning city. Despite warnings of defense officials, roads were clogged with thousands of vehicles, hampering work of rescue workers

CONTINUED

5

**Pageant, February 1, 1951**



Collier's, Aug. 5, 1950

Films: Films in December and February will be screened on campus on Tuesday evenings. If you cannot attend these screenings, you are responsible for obtaining your own copy of the film and watching it before the next class session. Films in January will be made available online. However, due to copyright restrictions and bandwidth limitations, you may find it difficult to watch the films online. In that case you will have to obtain your own copies.

Email: Please allow up to three working days for email responses. As a rule, I will not answer questions for which the answers are already publically available on university webpages (or on this syllabus).

Attendance: You are allowed to miss a maximum of **three** sessions. A fourth absence will remove you from the course.

Grading. Students in the BA program in American Studies must write an Independent Study and a term paper (3500-4500 words) OR an Independent Study and a take-home exam. I will distribute the list of texts for the Independent Study toward the end of the semester. The following applies to Lehramt students: LN (take-home exam or 5-8 pp. essay), term paper (12-15pp.), oral exam (contact me to set a date/time and exam questions). As a rule, I don't assign essay/term paper topics because I want to encourage you to write about what YOU care about. Of course, I am happy to discuss your topic and strategize with you.

Due Dates: I strictly adhere to the deadlines administered by the Philprom for the American Studies department, *even for students not in American Studies*. The dates are determined

within the first several weeks of the semester and can eventually be found here:  
[http://www.philprom.de/studium/faecher/amerikanistik/american\\_studies\\_bachelor\\_hauptfach/termine.php](http://www.philprom.de/studium/faecher/amerikanistik/american_studies_bachelor_hauptfach/termine.php).

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Course Reader (Script & Kopie)

John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen*, vol. 1

Pat Frank, *Alas, Babylon*

## SCHEDULE

### Session 1. Oct. 15. Introduction

## I. FIRST REACTIONS

### Session 2. Oct 22. "The Whole World Gaspd"

PRIMARY + Truman's addresses, August 9 + August 10: [goo.gl/HgqNnM](http://goo.gl/HgqNnM)  
+ James Reston, "Dawn of the Atom Era," *NY Times*, Aug. 11, 1945  
+ Norman Cousins, "Modern Man is Obsolete," *SR*, Aug. 18, 1945  
+ *Life*, "The Atomic Age," Aug. 20, 1945  
+ The Slim Gaillard Quartette, "Atomic Cocktail": [goo.gl/ZjXR7V](http://goo.gl/ZjXR7V)

SECONDARY + Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, Chapter One

## II. REPRESENTING HIROSHIMA

### Session 3. Oct 29. An American View: John Hersey's *Hiroshima*

PRIMARY + John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (last chapter is optional)  
+ Mary McCarthy, "Hiroshima's 'New Yorker,'" *politics*, Nov. 1946

### Session 4. Nov. 5. A Japanese View: Keiji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen*

PRIMARY + Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen*, vol. 1 (read Spiegelman's intro!)  
+ [http://hiroshima.mapping.jp/ge\\_en.html](http://hiroshima.mapping.jp/ge_en.html)  
+ *Hiroshima Nagasaki August 1945*: [goo.gl/IbWkuT](http://goo.gl/IbWkuT)

## III. HIROSHIMA, USA

### Session 5. Nov. 12. "Duck and Cover!": Civil Defense

PRIMARY + Civil Defense films: *Duck and Cover*, *Atomic Attack!*, *Atomic Alert*, *The House in the Middle* (links will be sent via email)

SECONDARY + Margot Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age*, Chapter Three

**Session 6. Nov. 19. Thinking the Unthinkable: Nuclear War and Human Extinction**

PRIMARY + Jonathan Schell, "A Republic of Insects and Grass," in *The Fate of the Earth* (1982)

**Session 7. Nov. 26. Apocalypse as Regeneration: *Alas, Babylon I***

PRIMARY + Pat Frank, *Alas, Babylon*

SECONDARY + Martha A. Barttner, "Nuclear Holocaust as Urban Renewal"

**Session 8. Dec. 3. *Alas, Babylon II***

PRIMARY + Pat Frank, *Alas, Babylon*

**Session 9. Dec. 10. The Bomb in 1950s Science Fiction Film**

PRIMARY + Byron Haskin, dir., *War of the Worlds*  
+ Robert Wise, ed., *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

SECONDARY + Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster"

**Session 10. Dec. 17. Laughing Ourselves to Death: *Dr. Strangelove***

PRIMARY + Stanley Kubrick, dir., *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*

**NUCLEAR WINTER BREAK**

**Session 11. Jan. 14. Awakening from the Big Sleep: *The Day After***

PRIMARY + Nicholas Meyer, dir., *The Day After* (1983)  
+ Reagan, "Evil Empire" speech  
+ Ronald Reagan, from *The Reagan Diaries* and *An American Life*  
+ Mark Gerzon, "Children Watch?", *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1983  
+ Letters to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 27, 1983

+ “Freeze Support Rises Slightly,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 23, 1983

SECONDARY

+ Boyer, “From the H-Bomb to Star Wars”

#### IV. AFTER THE COLD WAR

##### **Session 12. Jan. 21. American Power after the End of History: *Independence Day***

PRIMARY

+ Roland Emmerich, dir., *Independence Day* (1996)

+ Francis Fukuyama, from “The End of History?” (1989)

##### **Session 13. Jan 28. History Wars: The *Enola Gay* Controversy**

PRIMARY

+ Brief summary of the *Enola Gay* controversy

+ Side-by-side comparison of two drafts of the *Enola Gay* exhibit

+ “The Mission That Ended the War,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 14, 1994

+ Pat Buchanan, “Toying with US History,” *Toledo Blade*, Nov. 7, 1994

+ Fellowship of Reconciliation Resource Packet

+ Sherwin, “The Assault on History,” *The Nation*, May 15, 1995

+ Media reactions to final exhibit, June, 1995

SECONDARY

+ Edward T. Linenthal, “Anatomy of a Controversy”

##### **Session 14. Feb. 4. “I’ll Be Back”: The *Terminator* as Nuclear History**

PRIMARY

+ James Cameron, dir., *Terminator* and *T2*

+ Jonathan Mostow, dir., *Terminator 3*

##### **Session 15. Feb. 18. Wrap-Up: Nuclear Weapons Today**

PRIMARY

+ Alan Robock and Owen Brian Toon, “Local Nuclear War, Global Suffering,” *Scientific American*, Jan., 2010

+ US Department of Defense *Nuclear Posture Review 2010* (executive summary only)

+ John Bolton and John Yoo, “An Obsolete Nuclear Treaty Even Before Russia Cheated,” *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 9, 2014

SECONDARY

+ Eric Schlosser, epilogue to *Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety*