Course Number: TC 302
Title: The Atomic Bomb in History, Film and Literature

Instructor: Professor Michael B. Stoff, Department of History

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will examine the development and use of the atomic bombs on Japan. Employing a variety of primary sources both written and visual, we will explore the two weapons from historical, cinematic and literary perspectives as well as from American and Japanese vantage w in the years before, during and after the Second World War.

CONTENT
The course seeks to explain why and how the atomic bombs were invented, how and why they were used, and what the consequences of their use were for the world at large. We will look at both the bombers and the bombed and investigate how atomic weapons transformed the lives of those who employed them and those against whom they were employed. No event in the twentieth century had a greater impact on the course of human history than what is now regarded as the world’s first nuclear war. And in the twenty-first century, no even is more salient.

CORE OBJECTIVES
Students will be asked to examine and interpret a variety of materials, including archival documents, feature films, and novels/narrative non-fiction that deal with the use and consequences of the atomic bombs at the end of the Second World War. These sources will be derived from both American and Japanese materials. Students will be asked to compare and contrast these perspectives in weekly discussions, in short papers and in classroom debate. Students will also be asked to draw conclusions in several short, written exercises throughout the semester and one longer assignment at the end of it. They will develop intercultural competence through the study of how Americans and Japanese looked at the atomic bombs and how their experiences with them were shaped by the cultures from which they came. A role-playing exercise involving either the decision to use the weapon or perhaps a war crimes trial will allow students to work together in reaching a consensus on use of the weapons. This will inevitably lead us to discussions of the moral and ethical considerations of nuclear weapons both then and now. Thus, the objectives of the course cover at least five of the six Core Objects of Signature Courses: critical-thinking skills; written and oral communication skills; and teamwork as well as social and personal responsibility in the challenging environment of war.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING
Writing
Writing will be worth 50 percent of the course grade. Each week, students will be required to write a series of reactive questions to that week’s assignment, which will form the basis of class discussion. (in conjunction with discussion 20 percent). They will also be required to write three 1000-word review essays involving one of the sources discussed in class in each of the three sections of the course (History: Film; Literature). These will be written first in draft form (and edited by the instructor and at least one other student in the class) and final form, taking the edits into account (10 percent each). Students will also write a prospectus for a research project of their own design (20 percent).

Oral Presentation
Students will either engage in a role-playing exercise in which they will pretend to be one of the historical characters (President Harry Truman; Secretary of War Henry Stimson; General Leslie Groves, military head of the Manhattan Project; J. Robert Oppenheimer, scientific head of Los Alamos; etc.) during a Cabinet meeting to decide on the use of the weapons or a war crimes trial of some of these same characters. Since neither of these events either occurred, students will need to examine the sources for each character and think creatively about how these events might have happened. This exercise will be worth 20 percent of the course grade.

Discussion
Students will discuss sources on a weekly basis. In addition, they will corroborate through a course blog on the questions for each week’s discussion (20 percent).

Information Literacy
As the final assignment, students will be asked to write a 1500-word prospectus with footnotes and an annotated bibliography on a research project of their own choosing in consultation with the professor (see above).

Gems of the University
We will have a tour of the Perry Castañeda Library run by the History bibliographer, emphasizing the materials available both in the library and online for students seeking to research this subject.

University Lecture Series
Students will be required to attend at least one of the University Lectures and write a brief summary of the lecture, raise at least one question about it, and discuss a possible answer to that question.

WRITING FLAG
Students will write three 1000-word analytical essays about one source or document in each of the three sections of the course. They will have to explain the context within which the source was created, explain how and why it was created, and analyze its historical, cinematic or literary importance. They will also write a 1500-word prospectus that explains the design and sources for a research project about the atomic bombs. A draft of each of these substantial writing assignments will be edited by the instructor and by at least one peer after which students will rewrite the assignment.
based on the feedback they receive. Writing will constitute 50 percent of the course grade.

LIST OF SOURCES

Sources for History:
Michael B. Stoff et al., eds., The Manhattan Project: A Documentary Introduction to the Atomic Age (1991)*

Sources for Film:
The Beginning or the End (d. Norman Taurog; 1947)
Barefoot Gen (d. Mori Masaki; 1983)
Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (d. Stanley Kubrick; 1964)

Sources for Literature:
John Hersey, Hiroshima (1946)
Masuji Ibuse, Black Rain (1969)
Robert Olen Butler, Countrymen of Bones (1994)
Chad Diehl, ed., And the River Flowed as a Raft of Corpses: The Poetry of Yamaguchi Tsutomu (Survivor of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki)

*All royalties from required reading bearing my name go to student scholarships at UT.

Biography
Michael B. Stoff received his B.A. from Rutgers College and Ph.D. from Yale University. He is currently Associate Professor of History, University Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor and an Organization of American Historians Distinguished Lecturer. For over a decade, he served as the Director of the nationally acclaimed Plan II Honors Program at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of Oil, War and American Security, co-editor of The Manhattan Project: A Documentary Introduction to the Atomic Age, series co-editor of The Oxford New Narratives in American History and co-author of five American history textbooks. He has been honored many times for his teaching, most recently with the UT system-wide Regents Outstanding Teaching Award. In 2015, he was recognized for his contributions with induction into the Philosophical Society of Texas. He is at work on a book about Nagasaki and the meaning of the atomic bomb.