

Introduction to Nuclear Weapons Policy **Course Outline, TU Dresden, Summer Semester 2012**

Why would you take this class?

At the end of this seminar, you should be able to give a rather sophisticated reply to the question of what people think nuclear weapons can or cannot do. Policy makers and defense intellectuals have struggled now for more than six decades to find a definitive answer to this dilemma. Given its locus at the intersection of policy with technology and secrecy, many have found it not to be an easy question. Thus, should you feel it does not deserve plenty of reading, thinking, and discussing, you are probably better advised to run for the hills.

On the other hand, such knowledge can be valuable – nuclear policy expertise is currently in demand and I think chances are good that it might be even more in the future. In addition, some people would say it could also be fun – you might even be able to critique Hollywood productions involving atomic weapons ☺. More details below, but in a nutshell, this course will be an opportunity to familiarize yourself with the most important debates within the nuclear field, understand the technical basics of nuclear weapons, and gain some knowledge of historical developments related to the atomic age.

You are not sure whether you want to take this class? Watch the introductory lecture (<http://youtu.be/gqX0W7lRY9Y>). You are already persuaded? Watch it anyhow – it is the first requirement of the class. In this first presentation, you can see your instructor struggling to fit (most) issues to be addressed in the course within less than an hour. The idea is not to provide definitive answers, but to give some background and lure you with a number of intriguing questions. You do not need to prepare for this lecture, but I thought you might be interested in this witty short teaser – *Michael Rühle, Wie wird man Atommacht?* – German version is best, but translation also attached.

What logistics to keep in mind?

Besides the mandatory video introduction above, this seminar will stretch over four days, with three DS sessions each day. Thus, we will meet **Saturday and Sunday, 21-22 April and 12-13 May, 9:20-10:50/11:10-12:40 and 14:00-15:30** (location: WIL/C206). Presence at all sessions is mandatory – please contact me directly to discuss any inescapable absence of up to a maximum of two sessions. While each session will require significant preparation time, there are no time-constraints in this respect; all materials will be available and you can start the groundwork as soon as 5 April.

To ease communication among the 24 students admitted to this class, we will use a free learning management system called Canvas ([link](#), for the moment just FYI). I know another web-tool is not your favorite news of the day, but I am really confident Canvas will make our life easier. You will first register with the ZIS (<https://www.zis.tu-dresden.de/einschreibung/>) and I will be forwarded your email addresses. As a registered student, you should receive an invitation from me to join the class by 3 April. Contact me if this does not happen – email above.

What will happen in this course?

Given the nature of the discipline, completing a significant number of readings and watching a few videos will be unavoidable. In class, my lecturing will be held to a minimum. Most of the time will be dedicated to discussing the prepared materials, engaging in a series of structured debates, and giving/listening to short presentations. To maximize your learning experience, these tasks will be required from **ALL** students registering for the class – no exceptions will be made, notwithstanding any requirements you might have towards your degree. I am open to accommodating a take-home

essay to be assigned at the end of the class to the students desiring such a task. All materials will be made available through Canvas. My personal assessment is that in order to achieve good results in this course, you should budget at least twice (3x for essay writers, see below) the time spent in session for work outside of class – with a total of 12DS in session, this means 24-36DS of preparation time. I provide this assessment only to help your time management and to make you aware of the fact that this topic does require a significant work-load; obviously, a significantly larger time investment will help you take away even more from this seminar.

Readings: The selected materials are indispensable for productive discussions during the sessions. Thus, failing to look at these materials will be detrimental both to your and your colleagues' learning experience. On average, around 40 pages will be assigned for each session (1-2 papers), summing up to 120 pages for each of the four days. You will be required to complete a quiz with 15 randomized questions for each day of class. These quizzes will open on 10 April but each of them is due no later than eight hours before the corresponding day (1am on Saturday, respectively on Sunday). A trial quiz will be available, but you can start each of the four quizzes only once. However, if you consulted the materials, the questions should not pose too many challenges.

Issue Presentations: I am convinced that you will have enough of me talking during this compact course. Thus, I trust that the better way to have you and your colleagues grasp certain problems is to have them explained by peers. Therefore, each student will have 5-7 minutes to present an answer to a "technical" question. As soon as all students are registered, a list of topics will be made available on Canvas, on a first-come, first-served basis. Around 30-50 pages will be assigned to each topic – additional background research is not required. I welcome any additional efforts, but please remain aware of the time constraints – 7 minutes max. Your aim is to have your peers understand and retain information. Thus, whether you decide to speak freely, use PowerPoint, the blackboard, laser swords, or none of the above remains entirely up to you. Just, please, keep in mind that you might be presenting on Sunday morning and your colleagues might need more than just strong coffee to stay awake.

Debates: A number of famous debates framed the discipline. Organizing such duels of ideas in class will help the course better grasp complicated issues. Similar to the above presentations, a list of debates will be made available on Canvas. Teams of two will debate against each other. Around 60-80 pages preparation literature will be made available to each side. For my approach towards additional research, see above. The debates will involve 7 minute openings from each side, 4 minute rebuttals and questions, and 3 minute answers. Each team will submit a 1-2 page summary of the arguments it wants to present within the debate no later than eight hours before the corresponding day (1am on Saturday, respectively on Sunday). Exact rules will be provided in due course. At the end, the class will discuss the outcome of the debate.

Final Essay: At the end of the second Sunday, just before ending our last session in Dresden, I am open to discussing two or three essay topics with the students interested in such a task. You will be able to choose one of the topics and will be expected to write a 3,000-5,000 words essay. The topics will be broad. I will appreciate and reward efforts to conduct additional research. However, you will be able to get an A solely by writing a thoughtful and persuasive essay based on the readings assigned for class. I am aware this is not the usual research paper, but the focus of this seminar remains on understanding the basics of the discipline – this essay will provide you with the opportunity to ponder again over the materials you looked at and discussed, and to potentially develop original ideas. As for the essay deadline, I am open to giving you as much time as the TU-Dresden guidelines allow me. However, after we agree together upon a deadline, no extension will be granted.

Class Participation: You cannot learn much if you don't reflect on these issues. I personally think the best way is to ask questions, discuss, and argue with your colleagues and with me. There are no wrong questions, no false arguments, and no bad ideas. Just to make it absolutely clear: openly expressing your questions and confusions counts as much as providing informed answers or clever critiques. However, I do not want to discriminate against less talkative students and I have full understanding for individuals having different approaches towards retaining and processing information and developing knowledge. Thus, there is no percentage point to be lost by being inactive. However, please keep in mind that this seminar rises and falls with your engagement.

Why and how to communicate with the instructor?

The ultimate purpose of this course is for you to learn something. Should you feel some topics are neglected, I will try to explore opportunities to include them in the course. Should you think the class would be better served by me making some changes in terms of logistics, content, procedure, or personal approach, please make sure to bring that to my attention. Mistakes and misunderstandings can (and will) happen – you have nothing to gain from waiting until the end of the course to signal problems.

As soon as all students are registered, you will be asked to send me a message through Canvas outlining your expectations from this course. After each day, you will have the opportunity to send me both nominal and anonymous feedback. Of course, you can always talk to me directly at the end of the sessions, or use my email address or phone number, should you think one of these means of communication is more useful. While I will try to provide you with constructive feedback to enable you to improve your work after every significant step during the course, please do not hesitate to get back to me if you think more input from my side could be useful.