February 12, 2018

To: Roman Kezerashvili

From: Kyle Cuordileone

CC: Interdisciplinary Course Committee

Re: Support Letter for Modern Physics ID Course

Dear Roman,

I would be happy to give a guest lecture in your Modern Physics ID course entitled “The Political and Social Implications of Nuclear Weapons in Historical Perspective.” This lecture will give your students a historical context with which to view the rise of nuclear power and the uses to which it was put in the service of nation-states, as well as the social and political consequences of a nuclear arms race. The topics of my lecture include the following:

1) The origins of the Manhattan Project and dawn of the atomic age, Einstein’s warning to FDR, secrecy, Los Alamos, the Trinity Test, espionage, the start of the arms race between the US and the USSR and the global politics of atomic weaponry.

2) The use of nuclear weapons in WWII and debate surrounding the atomic bombing of Japan: ethical considerations, the effects of radiation on Japan in the short and long term, Robert Oppenheimer’s doubts, the question of “atomic diplomacy” during the cold war.

3) The impact of the nuclear arms race on US society and the world: the Soviet development of an atomic bomb; the advent of the hydrogen “super” bomb, American fear and paranoia, fall-out shelters, drills; US testing in Bikini Atoll and the US desert and its effects.

4) Conclusion: “brinksmanship” and the close call with nuclear war in the Cuban Missile crisis; the concept of MAD (“mutually assured destruction”); Gaddis’ “long peace,” the world today (nations currently armed with nuclear weapons and the controversy about North Korea).

I may also use some very short film clips to provoke class discussion (e.g. film of the Trinity Test, comments made by the man who dropped the first plutonium bomb on Hiroshima, the effects of atomic testing on the Bikini islanders; fall-out shelters).

I look forward to working with you on this course.

Yours,

Kyle Cuordileone