World War II ended like no other war in history when the power of the sun was made to intervene in human affairs and bring down a rain of ruin on 2 Japanese cities. Here we will be looking at the triumphs and tragedies of the final days of WWII. Bitter combat across the Pacific gave way in 1945 to an air crusade against Japan’s home islands. Waves of U.S. B-29 bombers showered firebombs over Japanese cities, and in August a pair of A-bombs wiped out Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

How did America come to possess this awesome superweapon? Why was Japan the only country to be hit by the atomic bomb? What led to WWII ending with such apocalyptic violence? We’ll scour the record of events in search of answers. We will also confront ongoing controversies among historians about the necessity of the bomb.

Readings come from 6 paperbacks, including Jim Baggott’s brand new *The First War of Physics* as well as biographies of Emperor Hirohito & American physicist Robert Oppenheimer. Plus 3 novels to read for fun!

12-page paper, 2 midterm exams, no final.