

8.S271 “Nuclear Weapons: History and Future Prospects”

Prof. Robert Redwine and associates from the Lab for Nuclear Science and the Security Studies program will be offering a pilot subject on “Nuclear Weapons: History and Future Prospects” this spring. The course, under special subject number 8.S271, meets for a weekly 90-minute lecture Mondays from 1:30-3:00 in 26-414.

Subject Description

8.S271 in the Spring semester 2022 will be a subject which we believe will be of interest and importance to a wide range of MIT students. Our goal is to educate those taking the subject about how nuclear weapons came into being, the physics of these weapons, how they are structured, how they have evolved over the past several decades, efforts to control them and limit the threats that they represent, and what the possibilities for the future are. Many people in our country and other countries are not aware of what an existential threat nuclear weapons represent, and this lack of awareness is an important part of the overall threat. We hope to address this issue for the MIT students who take the subject and for those they influence.

The subject will meet in person once a week during the semester for an hour-and-a-half session which will include a lecture from an expert in the subject of the class as well as time for questions and discussion and time for working groups. There will be reading assignments associated with the class material as well as several writing assignments during the semester. Grades will be determined by in-class participation as well as by the writing assignments. Professor Robert Redwine has overall responsibility for the subject. He will lead some classes, as will Dr. Michael Hynes and Dr. Jean Bele, both Research Affiliates in the MIT Laboratory for Nuclear Science, and Dr. James Walsh, Senior Research Associate in the MIT Security Studies Program. A few other classes will be led by other specific experts.