# REPORT ON THE FILM SCREENING: "WHITE LIGHT, BLACK RAIN"

On 6th August, 2026, the Internal Quality Assurance Cell in collaboration with the Department of History, Loreto College (Autonomous) Kolkata organised a film screening of the HBO documentary, "White Light, Black Rain: The Destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" for the History Major students of Semester 2 and 7. Semester 2 students played a key role in organising the programme. The screening was followed by an intensive discussion session that highlighted the geopolitical, ethical and historiographical dimensions of the event. The documentary offered a harrowing and deeply detailed account of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Through archival footage, secret military recordings, and invaluable testimonies from both Japanese survivors and American military personnel, the film provides a comprehensive look at the human cost of nuclear warfare. Rather than presenting a simple chronological timeline, the content humanises the tragedy. It encourages students to establish a deeper understanding of the ground realities of war, moving beyond mere statistics to comprehend the psychological and physical trauma inflicted on civilian populations.

The second half of the session transitioned into a vibrant academic discussion where the students actively engaged with the complex historical arguments surrounding the bombings. The discussion segment was moderated by Bitasta Sengupta and Kriti Pathak of Semester 2. The discussion primarily questioned the ultimate necessity of using nuclear weapons. Students debated whether the deployment of the bombs was purely tactical or largely experimental. In exploring why Hiroshima and Nagasaki were selected, arguments were raised regarding the detachment of top-level political and military leaders from common lives, suggesting that the decision was heavily driven by a desire to assert global dominance. Participants noted that dropping the bomb on Tokyo might have killed the Emperor and prolonged the war, which led to the selection of targets away from the mainland. The session also raised critical questions: how any other individual would have responded in the position of U.S. President Harry S. Truman - specifically whether it was better to allow the Soviet Union to divide Japan (similar to the fate of Korea) or to use the atomic bomb to force an immediate surrender. This tied directly into discussions on the early management of nuclear power and the dawn of U.S. hegemony in global politics. Students also critically analyzed whether the documentary, being an HBO production, carried an inherently "Americanised gaze." This sparked a broader, highly relevant debate on propaganda as a tool used by state-controlled machinery, the press, and media to dominate public perception - a mechanism that students agreed remains deeply potent in contemporary global affairs. Finally, the discussion touched upon Japan's role as a Central Axis power challenging European empires, a phenomenon that paradoxically signaled the rise of Asia and fueled subsequent independence movements across various colonised nations.

This screening proved to be an invaluable experience for the students. For the Semester 7 students it had direct relevance to their current undergraduate syllabus. The session successfully pushed the

students' interest toward deeper research in these areas for their near-future academic pursuits. Ultimately, the screening helped the students realise how history is frequently shaped, packaged, and rewritten to fit the geopolitical interests of those in power, reinforcing the critical need for rigorous source evaluation in their historical studies.









