

Wednesday, 20 October 2021

12:00-1:00 p.m. (EST)

A Zoom Webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82231534062>

History of the Health Sciences Lecture

**Atomic Doctors:
Conscience and Complicity at the Dawn of the Nuclear Age**

James L. Nolan, Jr.

Chair and Washington Gladden 1859 Professor of Sociology

Justin B. Mutter MD MSc, moderator

After his father died, James L. Nolan, Jr., took possession of a box of private family materials. To his surprise, the small secret archive contained a treasure trove of information about his grandfather's role as a doctor in the Manhattan Project. Dr. Nolan, it turned out, had been a significant figure. A talented ob-gyn radiologist, he cared for the scientists on the project, organized safety and evacuation plans for the Trinity test at Alamogordo, escorted the "Little Boy" bomb from Los Alamos to the Pacific Islands, and was one of the first Americans to enter the irradiated ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in September 1945.

Participation on the project challenged Dr. Nolan's instincts as a healer. He and his medical colleagues were often conflicted, torn between their duty and desire to win the war and their oaths to protect life. Called upon both to guard against the harmful effects of radiation and to downplay its hazards, doctors struggled with the ethics of ending the deadliest of all wars using the most lethal of all weapons. Their work became a very human drama of ideals, co-optation, and complicity.


Co-presented with Historical Collections, Claude Moore Health Sciences Library and by the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at UVA (<https://iasculture.org/>)

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