COURSE GOALS

This course examines the politics and policy of contemporary Japan, applying a range of theoretical perspectives to analyze both recent history and current events. After a brief historical review, we survey the core political institutions of the postwar era, examine patterns of political interaction, survey recent social changes, and analyze current debates over policy issues ranging from economic reform to defense policy.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Quiz (9/27) 10%
- Two short papers (due 10/28 and 11/21) 40%
- bCourses postings 5%
- Class participation 15%
- Final examination 30%

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Books for purchase (also available on reserve at Moffitt Library):

 Krauss and Pekkanen, *The Rise and Fall of Japan’s LDP* (2011)

Course Reader (available at Copy Central on Bancroft)

* Items marked with an asterisk are available online via the bCourses site.

In addition to the assigned readings, you must keep up with current events in Japan by reading at least one quality newspaper and one weekly news magazine on a regular basis. You are strongly encouraged to subscribe, but you may also fulfill this assignment by checking Internet news sources regularly. You may want to keep a file of news clips to use for your press review paper. You are also expected to read any news clips posted on the bCourses site.
PART I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Japan’s New Politics 1993-present (8/30)
Gordon, 308-54.
* Steven Vogel, “Japan’s Long Road to Competitive Politics,” Current History (September 2010).
* Purnendra Jain, “What’s Next After Abe’s Supermajority in the Upper House?,” East Asia Forum (July 12, 2016).

2. Meiji Politics (9/6)
Gordon, 11-21, 47-75, 76-137.

3. Taisho Democracy, War, and Occupation (9/13)
* Garon, 3-22.

PART II: POSTWAR POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

4. The Postwar System (9/20)
J.A.A. Stockwin, Governing Japan (2008), 156-78.
Krauss and Pekkanen, 29-64.
Ichiro Ozawa, Blueprint for a New Japan (1994), 62-75.

5. The Party System plus a QUIZ (9/27)
* J.A.A. Stockwin, “To Oppose or to Appease: Parties Out of Power and the Need for Real Politics in Japan,” Japan Forum (March 2006), 115-32.
6. The Bureaucracy and the Media (10/4)

PART III: THE POLICY PROCESS

7. Contending Models (10/11)

8. Developmental State and Clientelistic State (10/18)

9. Inclusion and Exclusion (10/25)
PART IV: SOCIAL CHANGE

10. The Role of Women (11/1)
* Garon, Molding Japanese Minds, 149-205.

11. Demographic Shifts (11/8)

PART V: POLICY ISSUES

12. Economic Reform (11/15)

No class on 11/22.
13. Defense and Foreign Policy (11/29)
* Michael Green, *Japan’s Reluctant Realism* (2003), 35-75.

Course Review Session (12/6)
[Attendance optional.]
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

READING MEMOS (two postings total)
Write a one-paragraph memo (150 words maximum) on the readings for one class session and post it to the bCourses site by 12 noon the Tuesday of the relevant week. We will discuss some of the memos in class. The memos may take a variety of forms: 1) Critique one or more of the readings, 2) Relate the readings to a recent news story or news commentary, 3) Write your own question on the readings and answer it, 4) Propose a topic for discussion that relates to the readings, 5) Answer one of the discussion questions (see the bCourses site). Feel free to experiment with this assignment.

FREE DISCUSSION MEMOS (one posting minimum)
There are no restrictions on the length of these postings. You may write about anything relevant to the course. For example: review a book or a movie, report on a public lecture on campus, discuss a news article or opinion column, or debate policy issues. Postings beyond the one memo minimum will count toward your class participation grade.

You must complete the memo assignments in a timely fashion. See “Grading Guidelines” on the bCourses site for details.

PRESS REVIEW PAPER (due by 12 noon on 10/28)
Write a 1500-word essay on media coverage of Japanese politics. Focus primarily on the period of this course (i.e. August through October). You might review one newspaper or news magazine’s coverage of Japan in depth, or review news coverage from a variety of newspapers and magazines on a particular news story. Make sure to analyze and critique the coverage. Has it been accurate and insightful? Has it been biased? Do the reporters understand the dynamics of Japanese politics? How could the reporters improve the coverage? Incorporate course readings and material from class into your analysis.

POLICY ANALYSIS PAPER (due by 12 noon on 11/21)
Write a 1500-word essay on Japanese government policy in the period since Prime Minister Abe took power in December 2012 in one issue-area, such as economic reform or foreign policy. You are encouraged to focus on a specific issue (e.g. the consumption tax or the secrecy law) within these categories. Base your paper primarily on course readings, plus news clips on your specific topic as needed. Briefly describe this policy and then analyze the political factors shaping the policy. Focus on the political dynamics of the issue, not on advocating a particular policy stance. How does the Abe administration’s approach to this policy differ from that of the DPJ or previous LDP administrations? Which interest groups, government agencies, and political parties are involved in setting policy in this area? What are their respective positions on the issue? How do they interact? Link your argument to theories and analytical perspectives introduced in the course.

You are strongly encouraged to discuss your papers with the GSI and/ or the course instructor well in advance of these due dates.