Japan in World Affairs
PLSC 379/678
Spring 2015
Tuesday 1:30-3:20

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Course Description:

This course examines Japan’s place in the world in historical, analytical, and comparative perspectives. We will explore the workings of Japanese politics and foreign policy making to understand how Japan resembles and differs from other representative democracies. We consider the implications of structural changes in Japan’s domestic politics, society, and economy for Japan’s regional and global roles. Finally, we explore how Japan is coping with changing international realities including the rise of China as a world power. What considerations should Japan take into account as it formulates its foreign policy in the next century? How about the U.S.?

Course Requirements:

Students will be graded as follows:

1. Regular attendance and participation (10%).
2. A short paper (3 pages, 25% of grade) tackling a historical topic from the first few weeks is due in Week 5. The questions guiding each week’s readings provide some suggested topics for this paper.
3. A 2-page policy memo (20% of grade) is due in Week 10. Address this memo to the Japanese or U.S. government with concrete recommendations for policy change or continuity, giving reasons.
4. A final research paper (10-12 pages, 45%) is due at the end of exam week.
Course readings:

All readings for this class are available on ClassesV2.

Class Schedule and Readings:

**Week 1: Introduction**

**Week 2: Politics and Imperialism in Prewar Japan**

Questions: Who were the actors in Japan favoring military expansion into Asia? Who was opposed? How did the military government defeat the forces of incipient democracy in prewar Japan?


**Week 3: The American Occupation of Japan**

Questions: What was America’s posture to Japan just after World War II? How did the Cold War reconfigure the U.S. Occupation of Japan? What were the consequences of the Occupation for Japan’s postwar relations in Asia? Why are Japan’s relationships in Asia worse than Germany’s in Europe?

- Jennifer Lindt. *Sorry States*.

**Week 4: The 1955 System**

Questions: Why was Japanese politics “clientelistic” for much of the postwar period? What is the connection between the “personal vote” and corruption? What is the connection between political institutions and political culture?

**Week 5: Japan’s Government Business Relations**

Questions: Why were government-business relations so close in postwar Japan? What were the consequences for the Japanese economy? For Japan’s trade relationships? For Japanese growth and prosperity?

- Jun Saito, LDP and the Construction Industry

**Week 6: The Early Postwar U.S.-Japan Relationship: Security and Economic Dimensions**

Questions: What arrangements did the U.S. and Japan work out for “burden-sharing” in defense matters? Why were there big student protests in 1960 and 1970? How did U.S.-Japan relations change in the 1960s and 1970s? Why was the yen set to 306 to the dollar? Who opposed revaluation and who favored it? Why did Nixon end the Bretton Woods System in 1971? What were the consequences for Japan?

**Week 7: Economic Calamity and Political Response**

Questions: Why did Japan’s economy boom and bust in the 1980s-90s? What effects did the bursting of the bubble have on Japanese politics?


**Week 8. The Politics of Japan’s New Foreign Policy**

Questions: How engaged was the Japanese public in foreign policy during the postwar period? How has that changed? What is the nature of Japanese nationalism?


**Week 9: Women and Minorities in Japan**

Questions: Why is fertility low in Japan if female labor market participation is also low by OECE standards? What accounts for Japan’s lack of enthusiasm towards immigration?

Week 10. Japan’s Regional Politics

Questions: How has Japan coped with the rise of China as a regional and global power? What characterizes Japan-Korea relations? Is East Asia a status quo region or an unstable one?


Week 11. Japan’s International Economic Policy

Questions: Does international economic integration countervail possible military conflict and tension for Japan? Does Japan consciously use economic levers to create a peaceful environment for itself? Is Japan’s trade policy active or reactive to domestic politics?

Week 12. Environment and Energy

Questions: How has Japan managed to be a great economic power with few raw materials? How has Japan’s political economy of growth affected its policies towards the environment? What is Japan’s current role in the fight against climate change? How has the Fukushima disaster shaped its energy policy?


Week 13. Where is Japan Going?

Questions: What kind of country will Japan be in the rest of the 21st century? How will Japan deal with its large government budget deficit against the backdrop of a sluggish economy and ageing population? How will Japan configure its domestic economy? Is conflict with China inevitable?