History of Modern Japan
HIST 160/EAST 132—MWF—9:00-9:50—King 243

Course Description:
In less than a century, Japan transformed from a relatively isolated, semi-feudal collection of domains into one of the most prosperous nations in the world. This course explores the historical developments that enabled such an epochal transformation and it examines how individuals responded to dramatic and traumatic change during Japan’s modern era. Beginning in the decades before the Meiji Restoration (1868), we will examine, among other things, the social and political developments of the Meiji era (1868-1912), the culture of “Taisho democracy” (1912-1926), Japanese empire before and during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945), democracy during the Occupation (1945-1952), the spectacle of the Tokyo Olympics (1964), the Japanese anti-Vietnam War movement (1965-1975), the collapse of the Bubble Economy (1980s), and the nuclear disaster at Fukushima. Along the way, we will pay special attention to the construction of national and imperial identities by repeatedly asking ourselves how men and women re-imagined what it meant to be “Japanese” in extraordinary times. A combination of text-based and visual primary and secondary sources will help us navigate discussion topics such as nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, gender, photography, aesthetics, time, censorship, and modernity. By the end of this course students will not only have a firm grasp of modern Japanese history, but will also be able to discuss the differences between Japanese and Western modernity, the formation of Japan’s empire, the culture of Japanese nationalism, and the legacy of the Pacific War in contemporary Japan.

Course Objectives:
By the end of this course, students should be able to:
Understand how and why historical change occurred in modern Japan.
Evaluate historical arguments based on their critical readings of primary and secondary textual and visual sources.
Identify the motivations of historical subjects and place their individual experiences within broader social, cultural, political, and intellectual developments.
Explain the chronology of modern Japanese history and locate the key events and turning points that shaped life in modern Japan.

Evaluation:
Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:
1) 2 papers, worth 15% each.
   a) Paper #1 due 2/29.
2) Five weekly discussion posts worth 10% total.
Assignments (Detail):

**Papers:**
Throughout the course you will be required to write two papers (2-3 pages each) on material from assigned readings. You will be provided with specific information and formatting guidelines at least two weeks prior to submission deadlines. Papers will be submitted electronically through blackboard.

**Exams:**
The exams for this course will include short identification and essay questions. I am less concerned with your ability to memorized names and dates than I am with how well you integrate primary and secondary sources into your interpretation of Japan’s modern history. That being said, I often distribute handouts (keyword lists, relevant primary sources, etc.) in lectures and the material discussed there (and in your readings) will form the basis of exams. Blue books will be provided on exam day.

**Discussion/Responses:**
This course is a mixture of lectures (usually given on Monday and Wednesday) and discussion (usually falling on Friday). On designated Fridays, the class will divide into small groups to discuss questions/topics/issues related to assigned readings. Toward the end of class we will come back together to discuss our findings. The discipline of history is built on disagreements and differing interpretations. Please disagree, but remember to do so respectfully and base your comments on your consideration of the evidence.

In addition to your active participation in discussions, you are also required to compose reading responses. In week two, the class will be divided into two groups (Group 1 and Group 2) and each week members of a designated group will upload their responses to Blackboard. Each student will compose a total of 5 responses over the course of the semester. These posts are due no later than 3pm on the Thursday before discussion. These posts should be no longer than 1 double-spaced page and will not be evaluated as a formal essay. Instead, your responses will be judged on your engagement with weekly readings. Your response should include at least one discussion question* you would like the class to consider. You may be asked to read your response, or those of your classmates, during class, so do take them seriously. In addition, you must bring a hardcopy of your response to class on the day of the discussion. The grading for reading responses is as follows: 5=A, 4=A-, 3=B+, 2=C+, 1=C-.

Questions you should ask yourself when reading:
- Who produced this document and what kind of document is it? Who was the intended audience?
- Why was the work created? What conclusion(s) did the author(s) want their readers to take away?
  How did the author/creator accomplish his/her purpose? What kind of evidence or “proof” did s/he offer for the argument? What rhetorical elements or forms of persuasion are used?
- How does this document(s) relate to other class readings and why is it a valuable historical source?

**Course Policies:**

*Late Submissions:* History is primarily a written discipline and this course requires regular short assignments in addition to larger essays. Be strategic in how you plan your time. I will not accept reading responses submitted after Friday discussion sections. Essays will incur a 1/3-grade penalty per 24-hour period. In other words, if a B+ paper is submitted 48 hours late, the student would receive a B- after assessing the 2/3-grade penalty.

*Absences:* Attendance is taken every day. Absences will be noted and will count toward your participation grade. You will not succeed in this class if you regularly miss our meetings. Please contact me if you know you will be absent from class sessions.

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*The best discussion questions cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” and they are not intended to quiz your classmates on names and dates. Instead, try to formulate questions that require your classmates to think comparatively or to consider issues from different perspectives.*
Tardiness: Please try to be on time to all class meetings. If you must be late, please enter the class in the least disruptive manner possible. If you need to leave class early, please let me know in advance and do not cartwheel out the door. If you are more than 25 minutes late, you will be counted as absent for the day.

Laptop/Computers: I highly recommend that all students able to do so take notes by hand on paper. This method is proven to be most effective in helping students understand and retain information. Official course policy is as follows:

- **Lecture:** Laptops and tablets are allowed in class during lecture. You are required, however, to turn off your wifi and/or put your device in airplane mode during class time. If you plan to use a laptop, please consider sitting in the back of the classroom.

- **Discussion:** No devices are to be used during discussion section unless arrangements have been made through Disability Services. Please bring hardcopies of readings OR detailed notes to discussion.

Office Hours and Communication: I will be available in my office, Rice 305, on Mondays and Fridays from 11:00-12:00pm and again on Fridays from 2:00-3:00pm. There will be a sign up sheet posted on my office door each week. You are also free to stop by office hours without an appointment, but those with prearranged meeting times have priority. If you are unavailable during my office hours, please speak with me and we can find a time to meet that fits both our schedules. The best way to reach me is through my Oberlin email account listed at the top of page one. Do not expect a same-day response if you write me after 6:00pm. Also keep in mind that emails between students and faculty are professional exchanges and, as such, should be crafted with a modicum of care in regards to language and etiquette.

Students with Disabilities:
Oberlin College is committed to providing a supportive and challenging environment for all students. Oberlin works to provide all students with disabilities a learning environment that affords them equal access and reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Please let me know if you are eligible for and require accommodations in accordance with college policies, which can be found here at: [http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/](http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/)

Academic Integrity:
All students should be familiar and are required to adhere to Oberlin College’s “Honor Code.” The college requires that students sign an “Honor Code” for all assignments, and it should be included on the last page of essays submitted for this class. The pledge states, "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." More from “The Honor Code”:
Oberlin College students are on their honor to uphold a high degree of academic integrity. All work that students submit is expected to be of their own creation and give proper credit to the ideas and work of others. When students write and sign the Honor Pledge, they are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information, nor assisted others in these actions.

Further information can be found at: [http://www.oberlin.edu/studentpolicies/honorcode/](http://www.oberlin.edu/studentpolicies/honorcode/)

Required Books:

Optional Book:

Other assigned readings (marked with *) can be found online or on the blackboard site for this course. If you have trouble accessing readings, please contact me as soon as possible.

Class Schedule:
Mondays and Wednesdays are mixtures of lectures and discussion of materials distributed in class. Friday are reserved for discussion of weekly readings. Weekly readings appear at the beginning of the week and should
be completed by Friday. Come to Friday meetings prepared with discussion questions, interesting or problematic passages, copies of the readings, and notes. This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. You will always be notified well in advance in the event that the schedule is altered.

**Special Event:** The mandatory event listed below will take place outside our normal classroom and/or class time. Please plan accordingly. This event also appears in the weekly schedule.

4/13: Film Screening: (7:30-9:30pm, location TBA)

### Week One: Life in Late Tokugawa Japan

**Assignments:**
None

**Readings:**
*Duus, Feudalism in Japan, 1-12 & 73-102.*

(M—2/1): Introduction

(W—2/3): Establishing political control in Early Modern Japan.

(F—2/5): Status and society in the Tokugawa era.

### Week Two: Roots of the Revolution

**Assignments:**
Map Quiz 2/12

**Readings:**
Tokuda Shusei, Rough Living, pgs. 1-19.

(M—2/8): “Internal troubles” & “Threats from abroad.”


(F—2/12): Discussion: How did the Meiji Restoration address the concerns of Tokugawa-era anti-bakufu activists?

### Week Three: Building a New Japan

**Assignments:**
*(Group 1)* Reading response due 2/18.

**Readings:**
Tokuda Shusei, Rough Living, pgs. 21-172.

(W—2/17): Myth and nostalgia in Meiji nation building.

(F—2/19): Discussion: Was 1868 a revolution or restoration?

**Week Four: Culture and Society in the Early Twentieth Century**

**Assignments:**

(Group 2) Reading response due 2/25.

**Readings:**

*The Constitution of the Empire of Japan (1889).


http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/shiseido_01/sh_essay01.html (Link and pdfs available on Blackboard).

(M—2/22) From “civilization and enlightenment” (bunmei kaika) to “modern life” (modan raijū).

(W—2/24): Rural Japan in the age of Industrialization.

(F—2/26): Discussion: What did modernity mean to Japanese?

**Week Five: Building Japan’s Empire**

**Assignments:**

First Paper due 2/29.

(Group 1) Reading response due 3/4.

**Readings:**

*Saigo Takamori and Okubo Toshimichi Letters on the “Korea Question.”


**“The Black Dragon Memorandum” (1914).

(M—2/29): Reimagining the boundaries of Japan.


(F—3/4): Discussion: What motivated early Japanese imperialism?

**Week Six: Conflict & Chaos**

**Assignments:**

(Group 2) Reading response due 3/10.

**Readings:**

*Hane, Reflections on the Way to the Gallows, 75-118.

*Watsui Tetsurō and Kawakami Hajime, “Debate on the Student Arrest Incident of 1926.”

(M—3/7): The politics of resistance.


(F—3/11): Discussion: What explains the violence that occurred in the aftermath of the 1923 earthquake?

**Week Seven: The Path to War**

**Assignments:**

**MIDTERM EXAM**

**Readings:**

Cook & Cook, *Japan at War*, 3-68.

(M—3/14): MIDTERM EXAM

(W—3/16): Japan’s swing toward militarism.

(F—3/18): The culture of fascism.

3/19-3/27: Spring Recess—Catch up on earlier readings and sleep.

**Week Nine: The Asia-Pacific War**

**Assignments:**

(Group 1) Reading response due 3/31.

**Readings:**


(W—3/30): Life on the home front.

(F—4/1): No Class. (Makeup with film screening 4/13.)

**Week Ten: Defeat & Occupation**

**Assignments:**

(Group 2) Reading response due 4/7.

**Readings:**


*Sodei Rinjirô, Dear General MacArthur: Letters from the Japanese During the American Occupation,* selections.

(M—4/4): The atomic bombs in history and memory.
(W—4/6): Establishing the client state.

(F—4/8): Discussion: How did Japanese experience the Occupation? What are the long-term legacies of the Occupation?

**Week Eleven: Culture and Politics in Postwar Japan**

**Assignments:**
(Group 1) Reading/Film response due 4/14.

**Readings:**
* Stuart Dowsey, ed., *Zengakuren: Japan’s Revolutionary Students*, 193-225.


***7:30pm for a screening of the 1959 film *Ohayô [Good Morning]*, dir. Ozu Yasujirô.***

(F—4/15): Discussion: What characterizes Japan’s postwar national/popular culture?

**Week Twelve: Society and Gender in Postwar Japan**

**Assignments:**
Second Paper due 4/18, by 5pm (Blackboard Submission)
(Group 2) Reading response due 4/22.

**Readings:**

(M—4/18): Entrance Exams and “Education Mamas.”


(F—4/22): Discussion: How do postwar Japanese understandings of men and women’s “proper” behavior compare to their prewar and wartime manifestations.

**Week Thirteen: Contemporary Calamities**

**Assignments:**
(Group 1) Reading response due 4/28.

**Readings:**
* Norma Field, *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor*, 3-32.


(F—4/29): Discussion: Do these contemporary crises have historical antecedents? What do Japanese reactions to these crises tell us about contemporary values and/or concerns?

**Week Fourteen: Modern Possibilities**

**Assignments:**
(Group 2) Reading response due 5/5.

**Readings:**
Norma Field, *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor*, 33-176.

(M—5/2): Contemporary Japanese foreign policy.


(F—5/6): Discussion: What will Japan look like in twenty years?

**Final Exam: Thursday, May 12, 9:00-11:00am**