Modern Japan

Professor Raja Adal

Rice Hall 308 • raja.adal@oberlin.edu • tel. 5-6708

This course introduces you to the history of Japan from the Meiji Restoration of 1868 to the present. It will chart the tumultuous one-and-a-half centuries from Japan’s extraordinary rise as a world power to its current economic uncertainty, political ferment, and cultural dynamism. It will look at the history of modern Japan not only through the eyes of its political leaders, but through those of activists, entrepreneurs, imperialists, religious leaders, and artists. It will draw extensively on translated primary sources, on film and video, and on visual sources from Oberlin’s art museum, special collections, and online. Enrollment Limit: 40.

Required texts: Required texts have been ordered in paperback at the Oberlin Bookstore (basement) as well as placed on reserve at Mudd Library.


All other readings are available on Blackboard.

**Essays**

Letter graded work will consist of three take-home essays. Students will be able to choose one essay topic from a list of possible topics. The topics for each essay will be passed out one week in advance and the essays will be due on Tuesday March 8, Tuesday April 19, and Thursday May 12. Essays should draw on the material discussed in lecture and on the readings, but they will also require you to think through the material and elaborate a clear thesis. The essays should not include any outside materials and must be limited to a strictly enforced maximum of five pages (double spaced).

Papers are due on (or before) the due date noted in the syllabus. No extensions will be granted for the papers. Late papers will be marked down 2/3 of a grade for the first day and 1/3 of a grade for every day thereafter. One week after the due date they will no longer be accepted.
DISCUSSION PAPERS AND PARTICIPATION
Students will be required to post four 2-3 sentence discussion points or questions about the readings for the week on the online discussion board by Monday, 9 pm. A sign-up sheet will be passed around during the first week of class. The discussion points, will be evaluated as $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{\cdot}$, $\sqrt{-}$ or 0. They will be discussed in class but will not be returned to individual students. You are can ask the instructor for comments and/or for the evaluation of discussion points during office hours.

Lectures are an integral part of the course and attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to complete all readings and be prepared to discuss them in class.

The cumulative evaluation of the discussion points and of attendance will be used to determine borderline grades. A student whose grade hovers between a B+ and a B, for example, but who's discussion points were a $\sqrt{+}$ and who had good attendance will be likely to receive a B+.

FILM SCREENINGS
Three films will be shown during the course of the semester in King 243.

1. "No Regrets for our Youth" (Waga seishun ni kuinashi, 1946) by Director Kurosawa Akira will be screened on Tuesday, April 5 at 7pm and is required
2. "Know Your Enemy—Japan" by director Frank Capra is a 1945 War Department Orientation Film. It will be screened on Wednesday, April 6 at 7pm and is recommended but not required.
3. "When a Woman Ascends the Stairs" (Onna ga kaidan wo agaru toki, 1960) by Director Naruse Mikio will be screened on Tuesday, April 19 at 7pm and is required.

All films will be available for viewing on library reserve if you cannot make the screenings. Films will be discussed during lecture in conjunction with the readings for the week.

HONOR CODE
All students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments.

WRITING ASSISTANCE
Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Center in Mudd Library where tutors from the Writing Associates Program can provide strategies for improving writing skills.

OFFICE HOURS
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:00 am or by appointment
Students are encouraged to come see the instructor with questions about any aspect of the course.
LECTURE SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Japan’s Modern Revolution
Feb 8 (T) Introduction; Meiji Restoration
Feb 10 (Th) Dismantling Feudalism, Creating a Nation-State

Readings:
Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan (MHJ)*, ch. 5.

Primary Sources:
“Memorial on the Proposal to Return the Registers,” pp. 10-12*
“Imperial Rescript on the Abolition of the Han,” p. 12.
Conscription Ordinance, 1873. [Blackboard]

*All entries under “Primary Sources” can be found in Sources of Japanese Tradition, (Vol. 2, Part 2) unless otherwise noted.*

Week 2: Freedom and Popular Rights
Feb 15 (T) Civilization and Enlightenment
Feb 17 (Th) Freedom and Popular Rights, 1873-1889

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 6.

Primary Sources:
“Kido’s Observations on Returning from the West,” pp. 16-17.

Week 3: Building Modernity
Feb. 22 (T) Building Modernity
Feb. 24 (Th) Education

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 7.

Primary Sources:
“Progress of Female Education in Meiji,” pp. 115-16.

Week 4: The Meiji Wars
March 1 (T) 1890s: New Concepts of “Japanese-ness”
March 3 (Th) War with China, 1894-95 / War with Russia, 1904-05

Readings:

MHJ, ch. 8.


Primary Sources:

Second Essay due at the beginning of class on Tuesday March 8

Week 5: Generating Capitalism
March 8 (T) Empire Attained and Industrialization Begun
March 10 (Th) Factory Girls

Readings:

MHJ, ch. 9. (Review MHJ, ch. 7.)


Primary Source:

Week 6: Prewar Liberalism
March 15 (T) A Politicized Citizenry, An Enlarged Electorate
March 17 (Th) Min ponshugi / Contention in the Workplace

Readings:

MHJ, ch. 10.
Primary Sources:

**Week 7: Alternative Modernities**
March 22 (T) The End of Capitalism?; The Rise and Fall of Party Cabinets
March 24 (Th) Visions of a New Society

Readings:
MHJ, ch. 11.

_Spring Recess_

**Week 8: Depression, War, Defeat**
April 5 (T) Militarism and Politics
April 7 (Th) War and Defeat

Film (Required): “No Regrets for our Youth” (*Waga seishun ni kuinashi*, 1946) by Director Kurosawa Akira will be screened on Tuesday, April 5 at 7 pm in King 243.

Film (Optional): “Know Your Enemy—Japan” (War Department orientation film. Director: Frank Capra, 1945) will be screened on Wednesday, April 6 at 7 pm in King 243.

Readings:
MHJ, ch. 12.

Primary Sources:
“The Decision for War with the United States,” (1941) pp. 309-12.

**Week 9: Transwar**
April 12 (T) Reckoning and Repatriation
April 14 (Th) Rebuilding

Readings:
Dower, _Embracing Defeat_, chs. 2, 4, 6.

Primary Sources:
Second Essay due at the beginning of class on Tuesday April 19

Week 10: The High-Growth Era, 1956-1973
April 19 (T)  Citizen, State, and Democracy in the Postwar Era
April 21 (Th) Middle Class Life for Everyone?

Readings:
Dower, Embracing Defeat, ch. 17.


Primary Sources:

Film (Required): “When a Woman Ascends the Stairs” (1960) by Director Naruse Mikio to be screened: Tuesday April 19 at 7 pm. in King 243.

Week 11: The ‘80s Boom
April 26 (T)  The Making of the Bubble
April 28 (Th) Japan Inc.

Readings:
MHJ, Ch. 16.

Primary Sources:
Ishihara Shintaro, The Japan that Can Say No, chs. 2-3 (pp. 26-41). [Blackboard]


Week 12: The ‘Lost Decade’ of the ‘90s
May 3 (T)  The Bubble Bursts and the End of LDP Dominance
May 5 (Th) Aum Shinrikyo and New Limits on a Free Society

Primary Source:


Third Essay due at the beginning of class on Thursday May 12
Week 13: Issues for the 21st Century

May 10    (T) Constitutional Revision and War Memory
May 12    (Th) Future Concerns

Readings:
MHJ, Ch. 17.

Primary Sources:
