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 or online.

**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 Monday March 5, Monday April 16, and Friday May 11. Essays should draw on the material discussed in lecture and on the readings, but 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 maximum of five pages (double spaced).

Papers are due on (or before) the due date noted in the syllabus. 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 POINTS**
Students are required to post four (4) thoughtful one paragraph discussion points or questions about the readings for the week on the online discussion board by Sunday, 9 pm. A sign-up sheet is posted online. The discussion points will be evaluated as √+, √, √- or 0. Some will be discussed in class but will not be returned to individual students. You can ask the instructor for comments and/or for the evaluation of discussion points during office hours.

Evaluations of the discussion points 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 √+ will receive a B+.

Lectures are an integral part of the course. All students are expected to attend lectures, complete the readings, and be prepared to discuss them in class.

**FILM SCREENINGS**
Two films will be shown during the course of the semester:

1. “Black Rain” (Kuroi ame, 1989) by Director Imamura Shōhei will be screened on Thursday, April 5 at 7pm in King 239 and is required.
2. “Godzilla” (1954) by Director Honda Ishorō will be screened on Tuesday, April 19 at 7pm in King 239 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**
Mondays and Wednesdays 2:20-3:20 pm 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 6 (M)  Introduction; Meiji Restoration
- Feb 8 (W)  Dismantling Feudalism, Creating a Nation-State
- Feb 10 (F)  Discussion: Yokohama Boomtown

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 13 (M)  Civilization and Enlightenment
- Feb 15 (W)  Freedom and Popular Rights, 1873-1889
- Feb 17* (F)  Discussion: Felice Beato’s Japan

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 6.

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

**Week 3: Building Modernity**
- Feb. 20 (M)  Building Modernity
- Feb. 22 (W)  Education
- Feb. 24* (F)  Throwing off Asia
Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 7.


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

**Week 4: The Meiji Wars**
Feb. 27 (M) 1890s: New Concepts of “Japanese-ness”
Feb. 29 (W) War with China, 1894-95 / War with Russia, 1904-05
March 2* (F) Art Museum Visit

*Please convene at 1:20 pm at the Allen Memorial Museum.*

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 8.

Primary Sources:

**First Essay due at the beginning of class on Monday March 5**

**Week 5: Generating Capitalism**
March 5 (M) Empire Attained and Industrialization Begun
March 7 (W) Factory Girls
March 9 (F) Symposium Fukushima: Lessons Learned

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 9. (Review *MHJ*, ch. 7.)

Primary Source:

Week 6: Prewar Liberalism
March 12 (M) A Politicized Citizenry, An Enlarged Electorate
March 14 (W) Minponshugi / Contention in the Workplace
March 16 (F) Discussion: The Hibiya Riots of 1905

Readings:
MHJ, ch. 10.

Primary Sources:
Read for Friday: http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/social_protest_japan/index.html

Week 7: Alternative Modernities
March 19 (M) The End of Capitalism?; The Rise and Fall of Party Cabinets
March 21 (W) Visions of a New Society
March 23 (F) Film

Readings:
MHJ, ch. 11.

Spring Recess

Week 8: Depression, War, Defeat
April 2 (M) Militarism and Politics
April 4 (W) War and Defeat
April 6 (F) Discussion: Ground Zero 1945

Film (Required): “Black Rain” (Kuroi ame, 1989) by Director Imamura Shōhei will be screened on Thursday, April 5 at 7 pm in King 239.

Readings:
MHJ, ch. 12.

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

**Week 9: Transwar**
April 9 (M) Reckoning and Repatriation
April 11 (W) Rebuilding
April 13* (F) Art Museum Visit

*Please convene at 1:20 pm at the Allen Memorial Museum.*

**Readings:**
Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, chs. 2 and 6. [Blackboard]

**Primary Sources:**

**Second Essay due at the beginning of class on Monday April 16**

**Week 10: The High-Growth Era, 1956-1973**
April 16 (M) Citizen, State, and Democracy in the Postwar Era
April 18 (W) Middle Class Life for Everyone?
April 20 (F) Discussion

**Readings:**
Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, ch. 17. [Blackboard]


**Film (Required):** “Godzilla” (1954) by Director Honda Ichirō will be screened on Thursday April 19 at 7 pm. in King 239.

**Week 11: The ‘80s Boom**
April 23 (M) The Making of the Bubble and LDP Dominance (guest speaker)
April 25 (W) Japan Inc.
April 27 (F) Special Collections Visit

*Please convene at 1:20 pm in front of room 202 on the second floor of Mudd Library.*

**Readings:**
MHJ, Ch. 16.

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

Week 12: The ‘Lost Decade’ of the ‘90s
April 30 (M) The Bubble Bursts and the End of LDP Dominance
May 2 (W) Aum Shinrikyō and New Limits on a Free Society
May 4* (F) Art Museum Visit

*Please convene at 1:20 pm at the Allen Memorial Museum.

Primary Source:

Third Essay due at the beginning of class on Friday May 11

Week 13: Issues for the 21st Century
May 7 (M) Constitutional Revision and War Memory
May 9 (W) Future Concerns
May 11 (F) Workshop: The History of Current Events

Readings:
MHJ, Ch. 17.

Primary Sources: