This course surveys Japan’s modern transformation from the Meiji Restoration of 1868 to the present. It examines how political, social, and economic modernization were simultaneous projects while considering their impact on the lives of citizens at home and imperial subjects abroad. We focus on how economic volatility, popular struggles for representative democracy, war, and colonization represent aspects of Japan’s twentieth century experience as well as widely shared dilemmas of modernity.

**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.

**ASSESSMENT:**
The course grade will be based on the following:
- Mid-term (hour) exam: 20%
- Short papers: 20% each
- Final exam: 25%
- Attendance/Participation: 15%

**EXAMS:** The Midterm Examination, covering the lectures and all assigned readings to date will be administered on **Monday, March 3**. The Final Examination is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 14 from 9-11am**.

**PAPERS:** Students will write two 4-6 page essays, due in class on **Monday, March 17**, and **Friday, May 2**.
ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:
- Lectures are an integral part of the course, and attendance is mandatory.
- Students are expected to complete all readings and be prepared to discuss in class.
- Each week, students will be required to post one question (concerning the readings) on the **online discussion board** in Blackboard by **Thursday, 10pm**.

SHORT ASSIGNMENTS: Students will complete two 2-page writing assignments. The first will analyze a primary document and be due in class on **Monday, Feb. 18**; the second will focus on an object from visual culture and be due on **Monday, April 14**. Details to be explained in class.

Assignments are due on (or before) the due date noted in the syllabus. Only one extension will be granted per semester and must be requested during office hours **before the due date of the paper**. (Note: Requests for extensions may not be granted in all cases.) Late assignments will be reduced by one grade step per day. A paper due on Monday, November 12 which is turned in on November 13, for example, will get a “B-” rather than the “B” it merited. A “B” paper turned in on November 14 will earn a “C+”, etc.

FILM SCREENINGS: Two films will be shown during the course of the semester. The first, **“The Human Condition (Ningen no jōken)”** (1959) by Director Kobayashi Masaki will be divided into two screening sessions: 1.) **Friday, April 4 in class** and 2.) **Sunday, April 6 at 7pm** (location: TBA). The second film, **“The Family Game”** (1983) by Director Morita Yoshimitsu will be screened on **Sunday, April 20 at 7pm** (location: TBA). The films will also be available on library reserve to view on video if you cannot make the screenings. Films will be discussed during lecture in conjunction with the readings for the week.

**Allen Memorial Art Museum:** On **Wednesday, Feb. 27 and Friday, Feb. 29** students will meet at the Allen Art Museum for a special tour of the museum’s Ainsworth Collection of Japanese prints. The class will be split into two groups (one group per museum session). See details below under Week 4.

**Honor Code:** All students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments.

**Writing Assistance:** Students are encouraged to avail of the writing skills workshops offered by the staff of Student Academic Services (SAS) located in Peters 118.

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays 4:30 – 5:30pm and Wednesdays, 2:30 – 4pm
Rice Hall, Room 308
Phone: 5-6708
E-mail: Emer.O’Dwyer@oberlin.edu
LECTURE SCHEDULE:

**Week 1: Japan’s Modern Revolution**

Feb 4 (M) Introduction; Meiji Restoration
Feb 6 (W) Dismantling Feudalism, Creating a Nation-State
Feb 8 (F) Civilization and Enlightenment

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

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

**Week 2: Freedom and Popular Rights**

Feb 11 (M) Political Struggles: Who Belongs?
Feb 13 (W) Freedom and Popular Rights
Feb. 15 (F) The Meiji Constitution

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 6.

Primary Sources:

*Map Quiz, Feb. 13 in class
Primary Documents Assignment due in class Monday, Feb. 18.*

**Week 3: Building Modernity**

Feb. 18 (M) Schools, Hospitals, Factories
Feb. 20 (W) Unequal Treaties
Feb. 22 (F) Threatening Neighbors: Korea (1873) and Taiwan (1874)

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 7.

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

**Week 4: The Meiji Wars**
Feb. 25 (M) War with China, 1894-95 / War with Russia, 1904-05
Feb. 27 (W) AMAM visit
Feb. 29 (F) AMAM visit

**Readings:**
*MHJ*, ch. 8.

**Primary Sources:**

**Week 5: Generating Capitalism**
March 3 (M) **In-Class Midterm**
March 5 (W) Empire Attained and Industrialization Begun
March 7 (F) A Late-Developing Economy

**Readings:**
*MHJ*, ch. 9.

**Primary Source:**

**Week 6: Prewar Liberalism**
March 10 (M) A Politicized Citizenry, An Enlarged Electorate
March 12 (W) Minponshugi
March 14 (F) Contention in the Workplace
Readings:
MHJ, ch. 10.

Primary Sources:

Paper #1 due in class Monday, March 17

**Week 7: Alternative Modernities**
March 17 (M) The End of Capitalism?
March 19 (W) Visions of a New Society
March 21 (F) Erotic, Grotesque, Nonsense

Readings:
MHJ, ch. 11.

Primary Sources:

**Spring Recess**

**Week 8: Depression, War, Defeat**
March 31 (M) Militarism and Politics
April 2 (W) Total Defeat
April 4 (F) **Film:** Kobayashi, dir., “The Human Condition (Ningen no jōken)”

Readings:
MHJ, ch. 12.

Primary Sources:
“The Decision for War with the United States,” (1941) pp. 309-12.
*Part 2 of “The Human Condition” will be screened Sun., April 6.

**Week 9: Transwar**

April 7 (M) Reckoning and Repatriation (Tokyo War Crimes Trial & ’47 Constitution)
April 9 (W) Rebuilding
April 11 (F) Recreation

Readings:

Primary Sources:

*Visual Culture Assignment due in class Monday, April 14.*

**Week 10: The High-Growth Era, 1956–1973**

April 14 (M) Citizen, State, and Democracy in the Postwar Era
April 16 (W) Middle Class Life for Everyone?
April 18 (F) Social Revolutions

Readings:

Primary Sources:

**Week 11: The ‘80s Boom**

April 21 (M) The Making of the Bubble
April 23 (W) Japan on the World Stage
April 25 (F) Lessons for America?

Readings:
*MHJ*, Ch. 16.
Ishinomori Shōtarō. *Japan Inc.: An Introduction to Japanese Economics*.

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

**Film:** Morita Yoshimitsu, dir., “Family Game” will be screened Sun., April 20.
**Week 12: The ‘Lost Decade’ of the ‘90s**

April 28 (M) The Bubble Bursts and the End of LDP Dominance
April 30 (W) Aum Shinrikyō and New Limits on a Free Society
May 2 (F) New Social Phenotypes (parasites, freeta, etc.)

**Primary Source:**

*Paper #2 due in class on Friday, May 2*

**Week 13: Issues for the 21st Century**

May 5 (M) Constitutional Revision and War Memory
May 7 (W) Future Concerns
May 9 (F) Concluding Thoughts

**Readings:**
*MHJ*, Ch. 17.

**Primary Sources:**

*Final Exam: 9-11am on Wednesday, May 14.*