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.

Students are encouraged to keep in mind the following goals for maximizing learning throughout the semester:

- To look for patterns and themes in history. Students are encouraged to draw connections between major events and ideas in Japan’s modern history and those encountered in other history courses.
- To think about how historians practice their craft. In particular, students will learn to read and interpret a variety of primary sources as a way of understanding the creation of multiple perspectives on the past.
- To understand how history-writing is shaped by contemporary concerns.
- To improve expository writing about historical events; to posit an argument and develop it in a clear and logical progression.
- To polish the verbal articulation of ideas before an audience of one’s peers.
- To gain an appreciation for Japan’s role in today’s world, understanding the relationship between where it has been and where it is headed as a nation.

**Required texts:** Required texts may be ordered through an on-line retailer. They will also be on reserve at Mudd Library.


All other readings are available on Blackboard, unless otherwise noted.
Assessment:
The course grade will be based on the following:

- Mid-term (hour) exam 20%
- 2 Short papers: (1,400 wds.) 20% each
- Final exam 25%
- Attendance/Participation 15%

Exams: The Midterm Examination, covering the lectures and all assigned readings to date will be given in class on Monday, March 2. The Final Examination is scheduled for Thursday, May 14 from 7-9pm.

Papers: Students will write two essays (1,400 words each), due in class on Friday, March 20 and Monday, May 4.

Grading relies on the following scale: A+ 100-98; A 97-94; A- 93-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 65-69, F below 65.

Expectations:
- Lectures are an integral part of the course, and attendance is mandatory. Absences will be recorded. (In the case of personal or family emergency, students should contact the instructor to make arrangements for completing missed work.) Additionally, students are expected to be ready to begin promptly at 11:00am for each class meeting. Tardiness of greater than 10 minutes will result in a mark of “absent.”
- There are three basic types of readings in the course. The first are those from Gordon, A Modern History of Japan. These readings are useful for reinforcing the chronological narrative presented in lecture. The second type are scholarly articles (book chapters or pieces from edited volumes.) The final type are primary source texts. All three require careful attention to detail and presentation, though strategies for reading differ. Discussions of reading strategies will be discussed in the first weeks of class.
- Reading tips:
  o It is advised that students complete all non-primary document readings by the Monday class meeting each week.)
  o Students are expected to come well-prepared for Friday discussion sections by which time all readings must be completed. Always bring assigned readings to Friday discussions.
  o Be responsible for both your own and your fellow students’ learning. Together, you can ensure that all class time is spent in a productive discussion of ideas—an endeavor dependent on the timely and thorough completion of all readings by all.
- Honor Code: Students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments, concluding each with one’s signature beneath the handwritten pledge: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment.” Infractions of the Honor Code will be referred to the College Honor Committee. Questions regarding the citation of sources and proper attribution of information
should be directed to the instructor. For more information on the Oberlin Honor Code, please refer to the “Student Policies” section of the Oberlin College website.

*Collaboration with Classmates: You are encouraged to study together with classmates for all assignments. However, all written work must be yours and yours alone. If you have any questions about what constitutes allowable collaboration, please come and see me.

**Weekly Preparations:**
- In select weeks, students will be responsible for posting either a question or answer related to assigned readings on the **online discussion board** in Blackboard. Schedules for this assignment will be distributed in the second week of class. Students may expect to post six questions or answers during the course of the semester.
- Be prepared to engage with your classmates on Fridays during the weekly discussion section when we will conduct close readings of assigned primary sources. If you want a good grade in this class, you must participate regularly. Students with concerns regarding this stipulation should talk to the instructor at the start of the semester.
- Quizzes will be conducted at the instructor’s discretion. These will normally occur on Fridays by which date students will be expected to have completed all of the week’s readings.

**Friday Discussion Sections:** At the start of the semester, students will be divided into three groups, and members of each group will be “on-call” during the Friday discussion period every third week. What this means is that members of the on-call group will be responsible for answering any and all questions on the reading I choose to put to them. Competent, well-informed answers will count positively towards the student’s course participation grade, while the obverse will also hold true. (Main point: on your on-call week, come to class with a good understanding of the main points covered in the week’s readings.) Students “not on-call” on a given Friday must still do all of the week’s readings and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. One privilege of on-call students is that they can pose a question to any non on-call students at any time. Come prepared for a lively discussion section every Friday!

**Note:** If it appears that even a small minority of students are not completing weekly reading assignments in preparation for the Friday discussion period, I reserve the right to give pop quizzes.

**Audio-Visual Culture Assignment:** Students will write a 500-word description of a painting, photograph, sculpture, installation, film, or musical work of their choosing. Students should explain the importance of the chosen work within the context of relevant themes from the history of its period and, if appropriate, discuss cultural or historical allusions embedded in the work. The assignment is due **Friday, Feb. 20**.

**Film Screenings:** Two films will be shown during the course of the semester in Wilder 101. The first, **“No Regrets for our Youth”** (*Waga seishun ni kuinashi*, 1946) by Director Kurosawa Akira will be screened on **Tuesday, March 31 at 7pm**. The second film, **“Minbō no onna”** (1992) by Director Itami Jûzô will be screened on **Tuesday, April 21 at 7pm**. Both 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.

**Late Policy:** All assignments are due on (or before) the date noted in the syllabus. Only one extension will be granted per semester and must be requested during office hours **at least 2 days 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.

**Special Needs:** Requests for extra time on exams and other special needs must be made well in advance of exam times/other due dates and must be accompanied by an endorsement from Ms. Jane Boomer, Student Academic Services (Peters G27) Jane.Boomer@oberlin.edu; Tel. 440-775-5588 by **Wed. Feb. 11.** The note should include a detailed description of the type of accommodation required.

**Writing Assistance:** Students are encouraged to use the Drop-In Writing Center located in Mudd 101A (the Academic Commons) as well as other services offered by Oberlin’s Writing Associates Program.

**Class Etiquette:**
- Turn off all cell phones for entirety of class period.
- No internet surfing. Internet use during class period distracts not only the surfer but other students as well. Offenders will be prohibited from using laptops/tablets in class.

**Personal Pronouns:** Students with preferences in this regard should e-mail me at the start of the semester.

**Office Hours:** Students are encouraged to come see me with questions about any aspect of the course:
Th. 2:50 – 4:15pm and Fri. 12noon – 1:30pm
Rice Hall, Room 308

**LECTURE SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1: Japan’s Modern Revolution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2 (M)</td>
<td>Introduction; Meiji Restoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 4 (W)</td>
<td>Dismantling Feudalism, Creating a Nation-State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 6 (F)</td>
<td>Discussion of Primary Sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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: Defining Modernity**

Feb 9 (M) Civilization and Enlightenment
*Feb 11 (W) Freedom and Popular Rights, 1873-1889
Feb. 13 (F) Discussion of Primary Sources

*There will be a map quiz at the beginning of class on Wednesday, Feb. 12.*

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 6.


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

**Week 3: Building Modernity**

Feb. 16 (M) Building Modernity
Feb. 18 (W) Modern Economic Growth
Feb. 20 (F) **Audio-Visual Culture assignment due.**

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 7.


Primary Sources:
**Week 4: The Meiji Wars**

Feb. 23 (M) 1890s: New Concepts of “Japanese-ness”
Feb. 25 (W) War with China, 1894-95 / War with Russia, 1904-05
Feb. 27 (F) The Battle of Tsushima

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 8.


Primary Sources:

**Week 5: Generating Capitalism**

March 2 (M) *In-class Midterm*
March 4 (W) Empire Attained and Industrialization Begun
March 6 (F) Factory Girls

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


**Week 6: Prewar Liberalism**

March 9 (M) A Politicized Citizenry, An Enlarged Electorate
March 11 (W) *Minponshugi* / Contention in the Workplace
March 13 (F) Discussion

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 10.

Primary Sources:
**Week 7: Alternative Modernities**
March 16 (M) The End of Capitalism?; The Rise and Fall of Party Cabinets
March 18 (W) Visions of a New Society
March 20 (F) Paper #1 due in class.

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 11.

**Primary Source:**

---

**Spring Recess**

---

**Week 8: Depression, War, Defeat**
*March 30 (M) From Internationalism to Isolationism
April 1 (W) Imperial Japan at War
April 3 (F) Total Defeat

**Film (Required):** “No Regrets for our Youth” (*Waga seishun ni kuinashi*, 1946) by Director Kurosawa Akira on Tuesday, March 31 at 7pm in Wilder 101.

Readings:
*MHJ*, ch. 12.

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

---

**Week 9: Transwar**

April 6 (M) Reckoning and Repatriation
April 8 (W) Rebuilding
April 10 (F) Recreation

Readings:

**Primary Sources:**
Emperor Hirohito’s Rescript Disavowing his Divinity (1946), pp. 466-67. [Blackboard]
Otake, Victor (Masaru) and Douglas G. Haring, “Japan Looks Back on the Occupation.”

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

*April 13 (M) Japan in the Nuclear Age / Towards Economic Growth
April 15 (W) Middle Class Life for Everyone?
April 17 (F) Social Revolutions

Readings:
Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, ch. 17 (pp. 525-46)


Primary Sources:

**Week 11: The ‘80s Boom**

*April 20 (M) The Making of the Bubble
April 22 (W) Japan on the World Stage
April 24 (F) Japan, Inc.*

**Film (Required):** “Minbō no onna” (1992) by Director Itami Jūzō on Tuesday, April 21 at 7pm in Wilder 101.

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). [Blackboard]

**Week 12: The ‘Lost Decade’ of the ‘90s**

*April 27 (M) The Bubble Bursts and the End of LDP Dominance
April 29 (W) Aum Shinrikyō and New Limits on a Free Society
May 1 (F) New Social Phenotypes & Murakami, *Underground*

Primary Source:

Week 13: Issues for the 21st Century

May 4 (M)  Paper #2 due in class. Constitutional Revision and War Memory
May 6 (W)  Future Concerns
May 8 (F)  Concluding Thoughts

Readings:
MHJ, Ch. 18.

Primary Sources:

Final Examination: Thursday, May 14 from 7-9pm.