

POLITICS IN JAPAN (In Person)
Global Cultures Flag
GOV 321M (#37240)/ ANS 321M (#32055)
University of Texas at Austin
Fall 2024
MW, 10:00-11:30, UTC 3.134

Instructor: **Dr. Patricia L. MacLachlan**
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Course Description: This upper division course introduces students to major themes in the domestic politics of modern Japan, with an emphasis on the second half of the 20th century to the present. After contextualizing the course through an analysis of the July 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, we explore key events and institutions in Japan's pre-WWII and Occupation-era history; postwar party politics and the secrets of the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) long-term electoral dominance; Japan's economic "miracle" and evolving government-business relationship; the challenges of political-economic reform; and perspectives on politics from Japanese women and other politically marginalized groups. We analyze these and related themes from theoretical, historical, and comparative perspectives.

Global Cultures Flag: Politics in Japan is designed to increase student familiarity with cultural groups outside the U.S. We therefore pay close attention to the cultural and institutional foundations of Japanese politics, and with reference to comparable Western and other Asian experiences.

Prerequisites: 6 semester hours of lower division Government courses. No prior knowledge of Japan is required.

Required Texts: You don't have to purchase anything! All required readings are posted under Modules on the Canvas site for this course.

Course Goals: My aim this semester is to help you acquire the following:

1. A deeper understanding of Japanese politics and its broader historical, social, and economic contexts.
2. An increased ability to think theoretically, comparatively, and historically.
3. Stronger reading, writing, and analytical skills

Assignments:

1. Quizzes (In class, via Canvas) 15%

These brief, closed-book quizzes (6 to 8) will test your comprehension of the readings. Quizzes will be worth 10 points each and consist of multiple-choice and true/false questions, and/or questions requiring brief written answers. Dates will be announced in advance, and quizzes will be administered between 10:00 and 10:15 am. *If you are late for class, you will miss the quiz. No makeups allowed.* Your two lowest scores will be dropped from your final grade.

2. Exam #1 (In class, closed book, via Canvas, **Oct. 14**) 25%

This 80-minute exam will be divided into 3 parts. Part I: 25 multiple-choice & true/false questions. Part II: short questions requiring brief written responses. Part III: answer 2 out of 3 questions on the readings, devoting a substantive paragraph to each.

3. Writing Assignment: Due Fri., Nov. 15 at 11:59 pm 30%

Choose one of the following options:

(a) Write 2 short essays (total 5 pages) on topics assigned by me. Your essays must incorporate material from the assigned readings.

(b) Write a 5-page review of a film or novel on a theme relating to Japanese political history, politics, economics, etc. Your review must reference relevant lectures and assigned readings, and your choice of film or novel must be approved by me by **Fri., Sept. 27 at 5:00 pm**.

- (c) Write a 6- to 8-page research paper on a topic decided in consultation with me by **Fri., Sept. 27 at 5:00 pm**. Students who choose this option must submit an abstract, paper outline, and annotated bibliography by **Fri., Nov. 1 at 11:59 pm**. Since this is a more challenging assignment than options (a) or (b), students who complete it (i.e., receive a passing grade) will receive 5 bonus points for the assignment.

Further instructions and grading rubrics for each of these assignments will be posted on Canvas.

4. Exam #2 (In class, closed book, via Canvas. **Dec. 9**) 30%
 This exam will follow the same format as that of Exam #1.
 Exam is cumulative, but will emphasize material covered since Exam #1.

Grade Scale:

Letter Grade	GPA	Percentage Score
A	4.0	94-100%
A-	3.67	90-93
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.0	84-86
B-	2.67	80-83
C+	2.33	77-79
C	2.0	74-76
C-	1.67	70-73
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.0	64-66
D-	.67	60-63
F	0	59 & below

Class Guidelines

Attendance and discussions: Although there are no formal attendance or discussion grades in this class, a large portion of the course material will be conveyed via lectures and discussions. I therefore strongly encourage you to be both *present* and *engaged*.

- Be bold during class discussion, but please don't dominate!
- Students who make exceptional contributions to discussions—particularly those that draw on relevant readings—may receive extra bonus points on their final exam.

Class etiquette:

- Please arrive for class on time. If you must arrive late or leave early, you should inform me shortly before the relevant class starts.
- Please be respectful in your email messages to me. During the week, you should expect a response within 24-36 hours; if you don't hear from me within that window, feel free to contact me again. If you contact me over the weekend, expect a response on Monday.
- Please do not call me by my first name.
- Please be respectful of your fellow students during class discussions—even when you disagree with them!

Communications: Canvas Announcements and Email will be my primary mechanisms for communicating with you.

Exams will be timed and administered in class via Canvas. You must take the exams on their designated days. Students with documented medical excuses are eligible for a make-up exam, but you *must* inform me of your situation well *before* the exam.

Grade disputes: If you have reason to suspect a mistake in the grading of an exam or written assignment, send me and our TA a written explanation of the issue within one week of receiving your grade and, if applicable, *after* reviewing relevant answer keys and instructor feedback.

Laptop and cellphone policy: Scientific research has proved that college students perform better without the distractions of laptops and cell phones during lectures and discussions. **So, I ask that you put these devices away during class and take notes by hand.** You will, however, need your laptop for the quizzes and exams.

Late penalties: All assignments must be completed on schedule. Students with documented illnesses may be exempted from this rule. Late written submissions will be penalized 5% per day beginning one hour after the deadline.

Policy on Covid-19: If you feel ill or suspect that you've been exposed to Covid (or the flu), avoid coming to class and alert our TA immediately. We will help you catch up!

PowerPoint Presentations will be posted on Canvas the evening before relevant lectures. These are intended to outline and supplement the lectures. **To do well, you must take notes during lectures and discussions.**

Readings: You must complete the required readings. I will tell you in advance of a lecture when a particular reading will be addressed so you come to class prepared; if you wish to get ahead, read the works in the order in which they appear in the syllabus. All relevant readings should be completed before pre-exam discussion sessions. Note that exams and written assignments are designed to reward students who thoroughly engage the reading material.

You have the right to miss class for **religious purposes**. Please keep our TA informed of such absences.

Students with disabilities are welcome to request appropriate accommodations. Contact the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement for more information (<https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/about>) and be sure to speak to me early in the semester to discuss your needs.

Students guilty of academic misconduct (e.g., cheating on an exam or plagiarizing a paper) will receive a "0" for the assignment in question. No exceptions. Students should familiarize themselves with the following tutorial on what plagiarism is and how it can be avoided: <https://guides.lib.utexas.edu/c.php?g=539686&p=8083280>

Note that ChatGPT and related platforms must not be used to complete exams and written assignments.

Lecture Schedule

Unit I: Introduction

Aug. 26: Introduction to the Course

- No readings

Aug. 28: The Assassination of Abe Shinzō: What It Means for Japanese Politics

- McLaughlin, Levi. "The Abe Assassination and Japan's Nexus of Religion and Politics." *Current History* (September 2023): 209-216.

Sept. 2: Labor Day: No Classes

Sept. 4: Institutions: What Are They and Why Do They Matter?

- Newspaper articles:
 - 1. Richarz, Allan. "Japan's Lost-and-Found System is Insanely Good." *Bloomberg*, February 10, 2020.
 - 2. Rich, Mokoto and Dooley, Ben. "Japan's Secret to Taming the Coronavirus: Peer Pressure." *The New York Times*, July 2, 2022.
 - 3. Hida, Hikari. "Discreetly, the Young in Japan Chip Away at Taboo on Tattoos." *The New York Times*, April 23, 2022.
 - 4. May, Tiffany. "Japanese Student Forced to Dye Her Hair Black Wins, and Loses, in Court." *The New York Times*, February 19, 2021.

Sept. 9: Japan's Pre-1945 History in Theoretical Perspective

- Rosenbluth, Frances McCall and Thies, Michael F. "History and Culture," in *Japan Transformed, Political Change and Economic Restructuring*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, pp. 15-31 (Ch. 2).

Unit II: Postwar Japanese Politics in Historical & Institutional Context

Sept. 11, 16 & 18: *Remaking Japan: The Occupation Era (1945-52)*

- Pyle, Kenneth B. "An American Revolution in Japan." In *Japan in the American Century*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2018, pp. 106-146 (Ch. 4).
- Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). "Japan's Postwar Constitution." <https://cfr.org/japan-constitution/japans-postwar-constitution>

Sept. 23, 25 & 30: *Explaining LDP Dominance: 1955-1993*

- Rosenbluth and Thies. "The Old Politics, 1955-1993," in *Japan Transformed*, pp. 52-71 (Ch. 4).
- Kruass, Ellis S. and Pekkanen, Robert J. "Factions Under the Single Non-Transferrable Vote Multi-Member District System," in *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP: Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, pp. 100-127 (Ch. 4).
- Johnson, Chalmers. "Tanaka Kakuei, Structural Corruption, and the Advent of Machine Politics in Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 1-28.
- **Fri., Sept. 27, 5:00 pm: Deadline for choosing film or novel (Writing Assignment 'b') or topic for research paper (Writing Assignment 'c')**

Oct. 2 & 7: *Japan's "New" Politics*

- Rosenbluth and Thies. "Japan's New Politics," in *Japan Transformed*, pp. 95-122 (Ch. 6).
- Kruass, Ellis S. and Pekkanen, Robert J. "Factions Today," in *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP: Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, pp. 128-153 (Ch. 5).

Oct. 9. *Discussion Session*

Oct. 14: [Exam #1 \(In class, closed-book, via Canvas\)](#)

Unit III: The (Sometimes Dramatic) Evolution of the Postwar Japanese Economy

Oct. 16, 21 & 23: [The Postwar Economic “Miracle” and Industrial Policy](#)

- Plath, David. 2022. “Industrial Policy.” *The Japanese Economy*, 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 259-281 (Ch. 9).
- Upham, Frank K. “The Man Who Would Import: A Cautionary Tale About Bucking the System in Japan.” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 323-343.

Oct. 28, 30 & Nov. 4: [Japan’s Changing Political Economy](#)

- Maclachlan, Patricia L. “‘Storming the Castle’: The Battle for Postal Reform in Japan.” *Social Science Japan Journal* 9, no. 1 (2006): 1-18.
- Schaede, Ulrike. “From Developmental State to the ‘New Japan’: The Strategic Inflection Point in Japanese Business.” *Asia Pacific Business Review* 18, no. 2 (2012): 167-185.
- Maclachlan, Patricia L. and Shimizu, Kay. “Japanese Agricultural Reform Under Abenomics.” In Takeo Hoshi and Phillip Y. Lipsky, eds. *The Political Economy of the Abe Government and Abenomics Reforms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 421-444. (Ch. 21).
- **Fri., Nov. 1 at 11:59 pm: Deadline for submitting abstract, outline, and annotated bibliography (Writing Assignment ‘c’)**

Unit IV: The Marginalized in Japanese Politics

Nov. 6: [Minority Groups in Japan](#)

- No readings!

Nov. 11, 13 & 18: *Women in Japanese Politics*

- LeBlanc, Robin M. "The Politics of Gender in Japan." In Victoria Bestor, Theodore C. Bestor, and Akiko Yamagata, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society* (London: Routledge, 2011). Pp. 116-128.
- Kage, Reiko, Rosenbluth, Frances M., and Tanaka, Seiki. "What Explains Low Female Political Representation? Evidence from Survey Experiments in Japan." *Politics & Gender* 15, no. 2 (2019): 285-309.
- Norgren, Tiana. "Abortion Before Birth Control: The Interest Group Politics Behind Postwar Japanese Reproduction Policy." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 59-94.
- Osumi, Magdelena. "Abortion Legal and Apolitical in Japan, but Cost and Consent Present Barriers." *The Japan Times*, June 28, 2022.
- **Fri., Nov. 15 at 11:59 pm: Writing assignment due**

Nov. 20: *Japan's Immigration Challenge*

- Chung, Erin Aeran. "Japan's Model of Immigration Without Immigrants." *Current History* 118, no. 809 (2019): 215-221.

Nov. 25 & 27: *Thanksgiving – No Classes*

Dec. 2: *Looking to the Future*

- No Readings

Dec. 4: *Discussion Session*

Dec. 9: **Exam #2** (*In class, closed book, via Canvas.*)

Online Resources for Current Events in Japan

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/> (English edition of Asahi Shimbun. Limited access)

<https://www.cfr.org/blog/asia-unbound> (Blog on current events in East Asia by scholars at the Council on Foreign Relations. Includes postings on Japan. Open access.)

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/> (The Japan Times. Limited access. Back issues can be accessed via our library website: www.lib.utexas.edu → Find, Borrow, Request → Databases → J → Japan Times Archives)

<http://thediplomat.com> (The Diplomat: online news magazine covering current events in East Asia, including Japan. Limited access)

<http://www.eastasiaforum.org> (East Asia Forum: writings on Japan and other East Asian countries. Open access)

<http://web-japan.org/links/index.html> (provides links to government websites and English-language newspapers)

<https://substack.com/@observingjapan> (A substack blog on Japanese politics by Tobias Harris)

<https://japan.kantei.go.jp/> (The Prime Minister and his Cabinet)

<https://guides.nccjapan.org/homepage> (NCC: North America Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources. Includes useful tips for research on Japan.)

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/eastasia> (the website for UT's Center for East Asian Studies. Check for list of upcoming events on Japan and useful research resources)