

History 454: The History of Modern Japan

Professor Mark Jones
Central Connecticut State University
MW 2:00 – 3:15

Course Description

In 1868, the newly established Meiji government leaders issued the Charter Oath, vowing to catch up with the West and stating, “Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world in order to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.” A little over a century later, Harvard sociologist Ezra Vogel wrote the bestselling (in America and Japan) Japan as Number One and Japanese nationalist Ishihara Shintarō’s The Japan That Can Say No boldly issued directives to the West, stating how America and Europe could learn from the Japanese economic, educational, and social systems. In the century in between, Japan’s leaders and citizenry engaged in the twin projects of nation building and modernization. Both committed to and critical of these two goals, the Japanese citizenry—including farmers, salarymen, factory girls, middle class mothers, and right wing extremists--negotiated a place for themselves in the changing political, economic, social, and cultural fabric of modern Japan. In this class, we will examine together the changing and contested meanings of the modern and the experience of the individual and social groups embroiled in the modernization process. Primary documents, historical scholarship, film, literature, and popular culture will aid in our exploration of the following specific themes: Japan’s relationship with Asia and the West, the shifting nature of Japanese national identity, and the importance of class, gender, and race to an understanding of modern Japanese history.

Required Texts

Cook, Haruko Taya and Theodore F. Cook. Japan at War: An Oral History. New York: The New Press, 1993.

Fujitani, Takashi. Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Gordon, Andrew. A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Partner, Simon. Assembled in Japan: Electrical Goods and the Making of the Japanese Consumer. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Tanizaki Junichirō. Naomi. Trans. Anthony Chambers. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.

Course Requirements

The most important requirements of this course are faithful class attendance, punctual completion of all reading assignments, and active participation in discussion. Furthermore, you are required to write and rewrite two papers on monographs that we will be reading during the semester. You will submit a first draft of the paper, revise the paper based upon the professor’s comments and your own rethinking of the first draft, and submit a second draft. Finally, there will be a comprehensive final examination at the end of the semester.

Grading

Attendance and Participation - 30%
Paper #1 – 25%
Paper #2 – 25%
Final Examination - 20%

Expectations

- You are expected to attend every class. Attendance will be taken at every class. If you have more than three unexcused absences, you will receive zero points for your attendance grade. Absences will be excused only for medical reasons (with a doctor's note) or for family emergencies. If you have a family emergency, please e-mail me, preferably before the class, to inform me of your absence.
- You are expected to complete all assigned reading before the scheduled class. In-class writing assignments will occur in selected discussion classes. They will be used to determine your participation grade.
- You are expected to submit all assignments on time. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for every class that they are late.
- All assignments must be type-written. Furthermore, assignments may not be submitted via e-mail without the instructor's permission.

Class Schedule

Section 1 – The Meiji Era and Japanese National Identity

Textbook: Gordon, pp. 1-137

January 24 – Course Introduction

January 26 – The Crumbling of the Tokugawa System and The Meiji Restoration

Readings: Sourcebook #1--Smith, "The Aristocratic Revolution"

January 31 – Lecture: The Meanings of Meiji (1868-1912)

February 2 – The Problem of Japanese National Identity

Readings: Sourcebook #2 – Fukuzawa, "An Outline of a Theory of Civilization," Selections from Mei-roku Zasshi, Selections from Nitobe, Bushidô

February 7 – The Emperor's New Clothes

Read Fujitani, Splendid Monarchy

February 9 – The Emperor's New Clothes

Read Fujitani, Splendid Monarchy

February 14 - The Emperor's New Clothes

Read Fujitani, Splendid Monarchy

Section 2 – The New Men and Women of Early 20th Century Japan

Textbook: Gordon, 139-203

February 16 – Lecture: The Meanings of Taishô (1912-1926)

****Paper #1 Due ****

February 23 – Being a Man in Modern Japan (I)

Readings: Sourcebook #3-- Selections from Kinmonth, The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought, “Self-Help” (9-43) & Sourcebook #4 Karlin, “Gender of Nationalism”

February 28 – Being a Man in Modern Japan (II)

Reading: Sourcebook #5—Selections from Kinmonth, The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought, “New Ethics for a New Generation” (241-276) & “Afterward: The Sarariiman (Salary Man)” (277-325)

March 2 – The Rise of the Good Wife, Wise Mother

Readings: Sourcebook #6—Nolte and Hastings, “The Meiji State’s Policy Toward Women, 1890-1910”

March 7 – In-class Film, “I Was Born But…”

****2nd Draft of Paper #1 Due****

March 9 – Gender Ambiguity in Taishō Japan

Readings: Sourcebook #7—Sato, “The Moga Sensation” & Sourcebook #8--Rodon, “Taishō Culture and the Problem of Gender Ambivalence”

March 14 – Gender Ambiguity in Taishō Japan

Read Tanizaki, Naomi

March 16 – Gender Ambiguity in Taishō Japan

Read Tanizaki, Naomi

Section 3 – Imperialism, War and Occupation

Textbook: Gordon, 204-243

March 28 – Japanese Imperialism and The Road to War (1895-1931)

Readings: Sourcebook #9—Brandt, “Objects of Desire”

March 30– The Manchurian Incident of 1931

Readings: Sourcebook #10—Young, “War Fever”

April 4 – The Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945): The Experience of War (I)

Read Selections from Cook and Cook, Japan At War

April 6 – Pearl Harbor, The Pacific War, and War’s End (1941-1945) : The Experience of War (II)

Read Selections from Cook and Cook, Japan At War

April 11 – The American Occupation of Japan (1945-1952)

Readings: Sourcebook # 11--Dower, Embracing Defeat, 34-84, 225-253

April 13 – Japan and the Cold War

Readings: Sourcebook #12--Dower, Embracing Defeat, 525-564

Section 4 – The Postwar Years: Prosperity and Problems

Textbook: Gordon, 245-332

April 18 – Lecture: The Meanings of the Postwar Era (1945-1989)

****Paper #2 Due****

April 20 – The Quest for Recovery

Read Partner, Assembled in Japan and Sourcebook #13 – Dower, “The Useful War”

April 25 – Living the Bright Life

Read Partner, Assembled in Japan

April 27 – Living the Bright Life? In-class Film “Tokyo Story”

May 2- Living the Bright Life? In-class Film “Tokyo Story”

****2nd Draft of Paper #2 Due****

May 4 –Postwar Problems: The Underside of Success

Discussion of “Tokyo Story”; Read Sourcebook #14 – Field, “The Child as Laborer and Consumer”

May 9 – Postwar Problems: The Question (Again) of Japanese National Identity

Read Sourcebook #15 – Befu, “Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*” and Sourcebook #16 – Inaba, “Morning Comes Twice a Day”

May 11 – Wrap-Up Class: Japan In the 1990s

Read Sourcebook #17 – McCray, “Japan’s Gross National Cool”