Politics and Political Economy of Japan

KC 3994 Spring 2012

Wednesday 3:00-6:15

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Course Objective

This course surveys the post-World War II politics and political economy of Japan. Along with basic political institutions such as party politics and voting systems, we will examine business and economic policy (including industrial policy), labor and employment issues, and equal opportunity. An important theme will be examining the apparent disjuncture in policymaking and economic performance before and after 1990. Policymaking actors were highly successful in leading the country from its marginal position in the early 1950s to "economic superpower" status in the 1980s, yet Japan has since fared poorly in generating economic growth, creating "decent work," and supporting lower-income families.

To tie the materials more closely to the experience of study-abroad students, I have put emphasis on non-technical readings and broad coverage, including issues currently prominent issues such as education and youth labor problems, and the putative resurgence of civic activism.

Since current politics are a moving target, there will likely be some adjustment in readings by the time class begins (though this should apply to article-length readings rather than the books). At the time that this syllabus was submitted (end August 2011), I was still looking for well-developed materials on the current Democratic Party of Japan administration, and we were just starting to comprehend the true impact of the 3-11 multiple disasters.

Requirements

It is essential to do the core reading and come to class prepared to participate in discussion. In addition, students are encouraged to read newspapers and other easily available sources.

Each week, several students will present (5-10 minutes) difficult sections of the material each class. Probably 4 or 5 students will present each week, depending on class size.

There are no tests, but students will write three review essays, as described below.

In the first class, further explanation and guidelines on presentations and paper will be provided. There will also be lists of recommended readings.

Reading

The required texts are:

Jacob M. Schlesinger. 1997. *Shadow Shoguns: The Rise and Fall of Japan's Postwar Political Machine*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Ikuo Kabashima and Gill Steel. 2010. *Changing Politics in Japan*. Ithaca: Cornell.

Andrew Gordon. 1998. *The Wages of Affluence: Labor and Management in Postwar Japan*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Schoppa, Leonard. 2006. *Race for the Exits: The Unraveling of Japan's System of Social Protection*. Ithaca: Cornell.

Other readings will be provided.

Grading

20% Class participation

20% Presentations.

20% each for three review papers (about 1200-1500 words each).

Review papers: The course can be roughly divided into three sections: politics, business and labor; and social-related politics. Students are basically expected to write a paper on each section, but those with particular interests are encouraged to discuss other options with me. The review essays will be based primarily on the class readings and discussion.

The tentative due dates are February 22, March 21, and April 18.

Alternative activities. Depending on time, there will be film viewings, probably including the full-length "Senkyo" (English title, *Campaign*) and "Pictures at an Election," a 78-minute documentary. I hope to arrange talks with or by local labor activists or other notables, but nothing is set right now. Having guest speakers in class would be nice so that everyone can participate, but may be difficult to arrange, so meetings may take place outside of class. Similarly, some film viewing may take place outside class (although we will probably watch something the introductory class). Activities taking place outside regular class hours will, of course, be optional.

CLASS SCHEDULE

W1 Jan 18 Introduction

Recommended reading: Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan* (either 2003 or 2008
edition). Pp. 226-332. Not required, since this will be the introductory class, but provides
a strong foundation for the rest of the semester.

W2-3 Jan 25-Feb 1 Postwar Politics: The 1955 System

W2: Frances Rosenbluth & Michael Thies (2010) *Japan Transformed*. Pp. 53-71 (ch.4).
Jacob Schlesinger (1997) *Shadow Shoguns*, p.11-90 (Introduction, Part One).

W3: *Shadow Shoguns*, pp. 91-278.

W4-5 Feb 8, 15 Politics Today: The Decline of One-Party Dominance

W4: *Japan Transformed*. Pp. 95-122 (ch.6).
Ikuo Kabashima and Gill Steel (2010) *Changing Politics in Japan*. Pp. 1-104.

W5: *Changing Politics in Japan*. Pp. 105-149.
Frances Rosenbluth (2011) "Japan in 2010: Messy Politics but Healthier Democracy,"
Asian Survey (January/February). Pp. 41-53.
T.J. Pempel (2010) "Between Pork and Productivity: The Collapse of the Liberal Democratic Party." *Journal of Japanese Studies*. Pp. 227-54.

W6 Feb 22 Business & Industrial policy

John Dower (1993) "The Useful War." In Dower, *Japan in War and Peace*.
Shigeto Tsuru (1993) *Japan's Capitalism*. Pp. 44-52, 54-59, 96-118.
Simon Partner (1999) *Assembled in Japan: Electrical Goods and the Making of the Japanese Consumer*. Pp. 193-224.
Marie Anchordoguy (2005) *Reprogramming Japan: The High Tech Crisis Under Communitarian Capitalism*, pp. 11-18, 125-46.

W7-8 Feb 29, Mar 14 Labor

W7: Andrew Gordon (1998) *Wages of Affluence*, pp. 4-103.
Recommended: David Halberstam (1985), *The Reckoning*. Pp. 105-184 (chs. 6-9).

March 7 HOLIDAY

W8: *Wages of Affluence*. Pp. 104-224.
Recommended: Daniel Foote (1997) "Law as an Agent of Change? Governmental Efforts to

Reduce Working Hours in Japan." In *Japan: Economic Success and Legal System*.

W9 Mar 21 Youth, Employment & Education

Mary Brinton (2010) *Lost in Transition: Youth, Work, and Instability in Postindustrial Japan*, pp. xi-xvii, 1-69.

David Slater (2010) "The Making of Japan's New Working Class: "Freeters" and the Progression From Middle School to the Labor Market." *Japan Focus*. (online)

Shinoda Toru (2009) "Which Side Are You On? Hakenmura and the Working Poor as a Tipping Point in Japanese Labor Politics." (online)

W10-11 Mar 28, Apr 4 Welfare & Women

W10: Leonard Schoppa (2006) *Race for the Exits*. Pp. 1-16, 36-97.

Charles Weathers (2005) "In Search of Strategic Partners: Japan's Campaign for Equal Opportunity." *Social Science Japan Journal*. Pp. 69-89.

W11: *Race for the Exits*. Pp. 112-82.

Patricia Boling (2007) "Policies to Support Working Mothers and Children in Japan." In *Political Economy of Japan's Low Fertility*.

W12 Apr 11 Resurgent Civil Society, Emerging Problems

Yuko Kawato and Robert Pekkanen (2008) "Civil Society and Democracy: Reforming Non-profit Organization Law." In *Democratic Reform in Japan*.

Robin Leblanc (2008) "The Potential and Limits of Anti-Party Electoral Movements in Japanese Local Politics." In *Democratic Reform in Japan*.

Charles Weathers and Scott North (2009) "Overtime Activists Take On Corporate Titans: Toyota, McDonald's and Japan's Work Hour Controversy." *Pacific Affairs.*

Daniel Aldrich (2011) "With a Mighty Hand: The Japanese government's influential and manipulative role in commercial nuclear power." *The New Republic*. March 19.

Eric Johnston (2011) "Cash paved the way even amid safety doubts on high, ineptitude." *Japan Times*. July 16.

W13 Apr 18 Wrap-Up

The last week will be used to review, cover overflow, or new materials and class interests.