International Affairs 3231
Government & Politics of Japan

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CORE IMPACTS

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students’ broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:
- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:
- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:
- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZATION

This course aims to explain the political, economic, and social development of Japan. An overarching aim is to highlight lessons from the Japanese experience that may be emulated with benefit by other countries. The first non-Western country to industrialize, Japan managed to avoid being colonized, but its militaristic leaders drew from the Western imperialist powers’ playbook to subjugate a vast swath of East Asia into a Japan-dominated Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Afterward, a defeated Japan became the birthplace of the “developmental state” model, a state-led approach to capitalist economic growth. Although that model has evolved in response to domestic and international forces, its legacy continues to resonate. This is seen, for instance, in the country’s sometimes puzzling responses to the challenges of sustainable development. Indeed, in some areas Japan stands as a shining success story, yet in other areas it
lags far behind peer countries. An aim of this course is to make sense of this puzzling state of affairs.

There are no prerequisites for this course, and no familiarity with Japan’s language, history, or politics is presumed.

**LEARNING GOALS**

- Students will become more aware of the diversity of cultural and ethical systems in the world and be able to identify, critically analyze, and apply distinguishing traits/perspectives/formulations/institutions in comparative cases or issue areas.
- Students will acquire a basic understanding of the core theories, paradigms, and models that comprise the theoretical core of comparative politics.
- Students will apply the comparative method to critically assess the core theories’ ability to explain political, economic, and social change.
- Students will apply the comparative method and best practices in teamwork to solve a current problem of comparative politics.
- Students will defend their critical assessments and problem-solving proposals through compelling, evidence-based, arguments in written, oral, and audio-visual formats.

**INSTITUTE POLICIES**

- **Honor Code**: Academic honesty is required of all Georgia Tech students by the Institute’s honor code, the text of which is found at honor.gatech.edu.
- **Special Accommodations**: Students requesting academic accommodations based on a documented disability are required to register with the Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) at http://www.adapts.gatech.edu.
- **Diversity & Inclusion**: The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts – of which the Nunn School is a constituent part – supports the Institute’s commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in broader society.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Course grades will be determined by your performance on a combination of individual and group assignments. Course grades will be weighted as follows:

**Individual work**

- discussion post / peer review: 15 points (three posts / reviews; 5 points each)
- movie critique / peer review: 5 points
- midterm examination: 20 points
- anonymous peer assessment of oral presentations: 10 points
**Group Work**
- research design exercise: 10 points
- oral presentation: 20 points
- policy brief: 20

**DISCUSSION TOPICS AND COMMON READINGS**

The required textbook for this course is given below. Other required readings are available on the INTA 3231 Canvas or through the Georgia Tech Library’s website.

Cambridge, UK and Medford, MA: Polity, 2019  

Students wishing to pursue a particular topic in more depth should consult with the Instructor.

**LEARNING MODULES**

**Module 1**

*Lecture topics:*
- January 8: Course Requirements
- January 10: Course Overview

*Required readings:*
- Neery (textbook), Introduction
- Japan’s “Sustainable Development Report” in Jeffrey D. Sachs, Guillaume Lafortune, Grayson Fuller, and Eamon Drumm, *Sustainable Development Report 2023*

**Module 2**

*Lecture topics:*
- January 15: Official Institute Holiday - No class
- January 17: Political Development

*Required readings:*

**Module 3**

*Lecture topics:*
- January 22: Economic Development
- January 24: Social Development

**Required readings:**

**Assignment:** Discussion Post / Peer Review #1

**Module 4**

**Lecture topics:**
- January 29: Japan Before Perry
- January 31: Meiji Restoration

**Required readings:**
- Neary textbook, chapter 1

**Module 5**

**Lecture topics:**
- February 5: Taishō Democracy
- February 7: Government by Assassination

**Required readings:**

**Assignment:** Discussion Post / Peer Review #2

**Module 6**

**Lecture topics:**
- February 12: Pacific War
- February 14: Occupation
Required readings:
- Neary textbook, chapter 2

Assignment: Research Design Project

Module 7
Lecture topics:
- February 19: 1955 System
- February 21: Lost Decades to Present

Required readings:
- Neary textbook, chapters 3, 4, and 14

Midterm Examination:
- February 26: Midterm Review
- February 28: Midterm Examination

Module 8
Lecture topics:
- March 4: Diet, Parties, and Elections
- March 6: Executive Branch

Required readings:
- Neary textbook, chapters 5 & 6

Module 9
Lecture topics:
- March 11: Civil Society
- March 13: Japan Dilemmas

Required readings:
- Neary textbook, chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9

- “Japan falls to record-low 125th in global gender gap ranking,” Kyodo News (June 21, 2023).
- Kelly Ng, “Japan population: One in 10 people now aged 80 or older,” BBC News (September 19, 2023).
- “Japan’s population drops by nearly 800,000 with falls in every prefecture for the first time,” *The Guardian* (July 23, 2023).

**Assignment:** Discussion Post / Peer Review #3

**Spring break:** March 18 & 20 – no class

**Module 10**

*Lecture topics:*

- March 25: SDG Challenges
- March 27: Energy Security

*Required reading:*

- Neary textbook, chapter 10, 11, 12, and 13

*Required reading:*


**Assignment:** Movie / Documentary Critique

**Module 11**

*Lecture topics:*

- April 1: Disaster Governance
- April 3: Group Project Set-up

*Required readings:*

- Brian Woodall et al., “Institutional Resilience and Disaster Governance How Countries Respond to Black Swan Events,” Preprint available at [http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4442737](http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4442737)
Module 12

Group work:
- April 8: Group Work
- April 10: Group Work

Assignments:
- Status Report #1 (due April 13)

Module 13

Group work:
- April 15: Group Work
- April 17: Practice Presentations

Assignments:
- Status Report #2 (due April 20)

Module 14

Group work:
- April 22: Practice Presentations
- April 24: Oral Presentations

Assignments:
- Oral Presentation (April 24)
- Policy Brief (April 24)
- Anonymous Peer Assessment – Oral Presentations (due April 25)
- Anonymous Peer Assessment – Policy Briefs (due April 25)