

Contemporary Japanese Politics

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Contact

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Description

This course introduces students to major topics and debates on Japanese politics. Japan has experienced a dramatic change of the ruling party in 2009 from the long-lasting Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ); but the DPJ government soon became unpopular for reasons including the way in which they tackled the earthquake and Tsunami disaster and the nuclear accident in Fukushima in 2011. The general election in the next year made the conservative LDP return to power with Prime Minister (PM) Abe Shinzo in his second term. PM Abe again won the latest general election in 2017, thanks partly to his controversial economic policy called *Abenomics*. Its voter turnout was, however, the second lowest in history, which implies that political disengagement and dissatisfaction of Japanese citizens are rather expanding. This political process provokes such questions as to why the LDP has been so strong in Japan, why at the same time citizens are frustrated with the current party politics, and ultimately who on earth is governing Japan. These questions cannot be appropriately answered without sufficient knowledge and understanding of the political institutions, constitution, power relationship, political cultures and modern history of Japan. This course, therefore, examines these issues as well as some key contemporary public policies of the Japanese government in order to understand what really is going on in Japanese politics. No prior study on Japanese politics is required; but detailed knowledge about politics of your own country is certainly helpful.

Objectives

Students are, through this course, expected:

- (1) to deepen one's understanding of basic concepts and major issues in relation to Japanese Politics.
- (2) to be able to, in a critical way, examine contemporary Japanese politics and society.
- (3) to make a clear and logical presentation and write academic essays on topic relevant to current Japanese politics.

Assessment

- (a) Quiz (every session): 20%
- (b) Presentation (Session 9): 20%
- (c) Essay (1,000 words): 20%
- (d) Final Examination: 40%

Textbook

- No specific textbook is set for this course.
- The following books are recommended for those who are not familiar with Japanese Politics:
 - Goto-Jones, C. (2009) *Modern Japan: Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - McCargo, D. (2012) *Contemporary Japan*, 3rd edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
 - Kingston, J. (2013) *Contemporary Japan: History, Politics, and Social Change since the 1980s*, 2nd edition, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- The pre-session reading list for this course is provided in the first session.
- All the Pre-session readings can be downloaded from the e-learning system: <https://moodle.s.kyushu-u.ac.jp/>

Course Structure

Introduction

Session 1. Introduction

Part I. The Political System of Japan

Session 2. Modern Political History

Session 3. The Constitution

Session 4. Prime Minister, Diet and Bureaucracy

Session 5. Election and Participation

Session 6. Local Government and Civil Society

Session 7. Political Ideology

Session 8. Political Culture

Session 9. Media and Politics

Part II. Contemporary Public Policy of Japan

Session 10. Economic Policy and Welfare Policy

Session 11. Education Policy

Session 12. Immigration Policy

Session 13. Defence Policy

Session 14. Energy and Environmental Policy

Conclusion

Session 15. Conclusion