



Japanese Politics and International Relations

Dr. Kristi Govella, Associate Professor in the Politics and International Relations of Japan, Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies

Eight Lectures and Eight Classes in Hilary Term

Course Description:

Japan is often seen as a puzzle by scholars of politics and international relations. It has a vibrant and mature democracy, yet it has been dominated by a single political party for most of the last seven decades. It formally renounced war in its “peace constitution,” but its Self-Defense Forces are considered by many to be one of the most sophisticated militaries in the world. It surprised observers with its “economic miracle” after World War II, then it suddenly slumped into several decades of slow or no economic growth after the bursting of its asset bubble in the early 1990s. It is viewed as a powerhouse of cultural appeal and as a good international citizen by some, yet it continues to be embroiled in historical disputes over its imperial past. This course examines the evolution of Japanese domestic politics and international relations focusing on the end of World War II to the present, situating the country in regional and global context and highlighting the ways that its experiences shed light on broader questions in social science. No prior knowledge of Japan is required.

Course Assessment:

The main assessment will be a three-hour examination in Trinity Term. All students will be required to submit a piece of written work for assessment by the end of the fourth week of the term in which the classes are taught. Details will be given during the first class of the term.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand key domestic political actors and institutions in Japan in comparative perspective
- Analyze major trends in Japanese foreign policy since World War II across multiple dimensions
- Assess Japan’s changing relationships with other regional and global actors and institutions

Tentative Course Topics: (subject to revision)

- Why Study Japan? / Historical Foundations: From Feudalism to Empire to Occupation
- Political Actors and Dynamics in Post-World War II Japan
- Japan’s Evolving Domestic Politics and Society
- Japan’s Evolving Economic Policy
- Japan’s Evolving Security Policy

- Japan's Evolving Non-Traditional Security Policy
- Japan's Evolving Ideational Role: Soft Power, Norms, Values, Historical Legacies
- Putting Together the Pieces: Japan at Home and Abroad

Suggested Introductory Reading:

- Elise Tipton, *Modern Japan: A Social and Political History* (2016)
- Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* (1982)
- Robert Pekkanen and Saadia Pekkanen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics* (2020)
- Jeff Kingston, *Japan's Quiet Transformation: Social Change and Civil Society in the Twenty-First Century* (2004)
- Kenneth Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (2008)
- Sheila Smith, *Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power* (2019)
- Saori Katada, *Japan's New Regional Reality: Geoeconomic Strategy in the Asia-Pacific* (2020)
- Michael Green, *Japan's Grand Strategy in the Era of Shinzo Abe* (2022)
- Mireya Solis, *Japan's Quiet Leadership: Reshaping the Indo-Pacific* (2023)

Statement of Coverage

This document applies to students starting the MSc and/or MPhil in Japanese Studies in Michaelmas Term 2024. The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

Disclaimer

The information in this document is accurate as at 19 September 2024, however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges. If such changes are made the department will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.