

# Theories and Issues in Contemporary Japanese Politics

Fall 2024

## GSIS International Area Studies (Japan)

**\*THIS VERSION OF THE SYLLABUS IS FOR REFERENCE ONLY.  
The final version will be updated toward the end of August.**

Instructor: Sukeui SOHN

Email: [alfasomega@snu.ac.kr](mailto:alfasomega@snu.ac.kr)

Time & Venue: Wednesday, 9:30 am – 12:20 pm, Bldg.140 Room 105

Office Hour: By appointment

### Course Description & Objectives

The purpose of this course is to explore the theories and issues of contemporary Japanese politics and society. The class is designed to develop critical assessments on the issues related to contemporary Japanese politics by comparing various perspectives on a specific topic each week. Each student will work on individual topic and present personal research output during the second half of the semester. We will be reading both classic literatures and recent publications. The topics to be discussed in the class will range from the system of LDP's one-party dominance, the consequences of the political and economic crises of the 1990s, domestic politics of regional contentions, to recent rise of rightist conservatism.

### Requirements & Evaluation

Attendance & participation	10%
Presentation & discussion	20%
Midterm essay	30%
Final research paper	40%

#### Attendance & Participation

All students are required to attend class and participate in lively discussions. Missing more than one-third of the classes will result in immediate "F" for this course.

#### Presentation & Discussion

At every session, students are requested to make individual, resume-based presentations concerning the contexts of the reading materials, based on which the class will carry out discussions.

#### Midterm Essay

Midterm essay (or book review assignment) will be scheduled mid-semester. The instructor will provide with more details during class.

#### Final Research Paper

All students are required to turn in a final research paper at the end of the semester (12-15) pages, double-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman font). You may choose any topic discussed during the semester. This paper should be "critical" and "analytical" research paper with strong supporting evidence and **proper academic citations**. Plagiarism will result in immediate zero point for this assignment.

## Overall Course Schedule

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Note</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Course Introduction	
<b>Week 2</b>	Legacy of Prewar Regime	
<b>Week 3</b>	Institutions of LDP's One-Party Dominance	
<b>Week 4</b>	Japan's Security Policies: Origins and developments	
<b>Week 5</b>	Regime Transformation in the 1990s: Economic Slowdown and Political Crises	
<b>Week 6</b>	Changing Oppositions: Consequences of the DPJ government	
<b>Week 7</b>	The Supporters of the LDP: Changing party organization and governance	
<b>Week 8</b>	Midterm Essay Due (12 pm)	Online submission
<b>Week 9</b>	Puzzle of 'Japanese' Democracy	
<b>Week 10</b>	Politics of Aging Society	
<b>Week 11</b>	Constitutional Revision	
<b>Week 12</b>	Nationalisms of Japan	
<b>Week 13</b>	Japan and the Other: Domestic Politics of Regional Contentions	
<b>Week 14</b>	Student Presentation on Individual Research Paper	
<b>Week 15</b>	Final Research Paper Due (12 pm)	Online submission

## Course Schedule & Reading Assignments

**\*Reading assignments will be updated in later version of the syllabus.**

### Week 1 Course Introduction

#### <Part I: THEORIES>

### Week 2 The Legacy of Prewar Regime

Dower, John. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of WWII*.  
Chapters 12-13

Garon, Sheldon. *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life*.  
Chapters 1 and 5

### Week 3 Institutions of LDP's One-Party Dominance: Grassroots Democracy?

Curtis, Gerald. *Japanese Way of Politics*  
Chapters 2-3

Curtis, Gerald. *Election Campaigning, Japanese Style*  
Chapters 2, 5

### Week 4 Japan's Security Policies: Origins and developments

Schaller, Michael. *Altered States: The United States and Japan since the Occupation*.  
Chapter 1

Berger, Thomas. "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism."  
*International Security* 17:4.

Lind, Jennifer. "Pacifism or Passing the Buck? Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy."  
*International Security* 29:1.

### Week 5 Regime Transformation in the 1990s: Economic Slowdown and Political Crises

Pempel, T.J. *Regime Shift: Comparative Dynamics of Japanese Political Economy*  
Introduction, Chapters 3 and 6

Rosenbluth, Frances and Michael Thies. *Japan Transformed: Political Change and Economic restructuring*.

Chapter 7

### Week 6 Changing Oppositions: Consequences of the DPJ government

Weiner, Robert. "The Evolution of the DPJ: Two steps forward, one step back." In Leonard Schoppa ed. *The Evolution of Japan's Party System*.

Lipsy, Phillip and Ethan Scheiner. *Japan Under the DPJ: The paradox of political change without policy change*. *Journal of East Asian Studies*: 12 (3).

Shinoda, Tomohito. *Contemporary Japanese Politics: Institutional Changes and Power Shifts*.

Ch. 5 "Hatoyama's Antibureaucratic Stance"

Ch. 6 "Kan's Struggle in the Government and the DPJ"

### Week 7 The Supporters of the LDP: Changing party organization and governance

Krauss, Ellis and Robert Pekkanen. *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP: Political Party*

*Organizations as Historical Institutions.*

Chapter 9

Shinoda, Tomohito. *Contemporary Japanese Politics: Institutional Changes and Power Shifts.*

Ch. 3 “Institutional Changes and Koizumi’s Leadership”

Ch. 4 “Electoral Changes and Their Impact”

**Week 8            Midterm Paper Due**

**<Part II: ISSUES>**

**Week 9            Puzzle of ‘Japanese’ Democracy**

**Week 10           Politics of Aging Society**

**Week 11           Constitutional Revision**

**Week 12           Nationalisms of Japan**

**Week 13           Japan and the Other: Domestic Politics of Regional Contentions**

**Week 14           Student Presentation on Individual Research**

**Week 15           Final Paper Due**