

Politics and Government of Modern Japan
POL-UA 994, Spring 2021
Thurs 2-4.30pm
Room (when in person): TISC LC13

This course is an introduction to the politics and government of contemporary Japan. It explores how politicians have fought election campaigns, elected leaders, made policy, and governed in interaction with bureaucrats, interest groups, the media and voters from 1955 until today. Special attention is paid to the effects of institutional reforms on Japan's political system and current policy challenges in the realm of national security and demographics. The course centers upon discussion and debate of the readings assigned each week and there will be no lectures. One of the course's main goals is to provide you with an opportunity to develop and write a research paper of your own. To this end, the bulk of assessment is writing-based. The course includes the showing of documentary films *Pictures at an Election* (Axel Klein) and *The Slow Way Home* (Len Schoppa). No prior knowledge of Japan, Japanese politics, or the Japanese language is required.

Instructor: Professor Amy Catalinac

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Office: 19 West 4th St, Office 315.

Office Hours: Wed 10am-12pm.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation (20%)

This course depends *heavily* on your participation. There will be no lectures. You are expected to read the assigned material each week and come to class prepared to discuss it. When reading the material, focus on the research questions asked, the answers offered, and the evidence presented for that answer. Also consider whether alternative answers to the question were considered. The study questions in each session are not exhaustive, but are meant to guide your reading of the material for that week. In addition, you are expected to lead discussion of two readings (one reading in two different weeks). This will involve you speaking for 5-10 minutes to your peers about the reading. Typical discussions include a summary of its research question, its answer, the evidence presented for this, its takeaways, and your own thoughts about those. You may use slides to aid your discussion, but this is not required. Students will be assigned to these readings on the first day of class.

2. Writing Assignment I (15%)

For the first written assignment (due February 19), select an episode from Japan on the Record (available here: <https://jotr.transistor.fm/>) that relates to Japanese politics. Write a report summarizing the news item the commentator is reacting to and how his/her

research relates to this news item. In your report, be careful to separate out facts (what occurred) from the author's interpretation of those facts. This should be no more than 4 pages, double-spaced. Include your last name in the file title and submit it through NYU Classes.

3. Writing Assignment 2 (20%)

By March 26, you are expected to hand in an essay of between 4-5 pages, double-spaced. This should be submitted through NYU Classes and should include your last name in the file name. It is expected to draw upon what we have learned in the course so far and be thoroughly researched and referenced. The topic is:

- “Electoral systems matter a great deal. Discuss.”

4. Final Research Paper (45%)

The sessions each week focus on how politics and government works (and does not work) in contemporary Japan. For the research paper, your task is to apply what we have learned in the course to a particular policy area. Your task is to select a policy area, identify a change in that policy area, and construct an argument, using evidence, as to what brought about that change.

In constructing your answer, you may find that a concept we have studied, such as the rising importance of the Prime Minister or the declining incentives for interest groups to mobilize votes on behalf of politicians, can explain this change in policy. If so, make the case for why, using as much evidence as you can. If you find that the concepts we have studied are not useful in explaining this change and something else is, such as a demographic change, that is perfectly acceptable. You will be judged on your ability to identify a change in policy and construct an argument that explains this change, not on the degree to which you have “bought” the arguments of the scholars we have studied. You are also expected to consider other potential explanations for that change and use evidence to show that those explanations are incorrect.

To help you with this, you are expected to submit a 2-page paper proposal to me on April 9. The first page of this proposal will outline the research question you plan to tackle in your paper and your (tentative) answer to this question. The second page will be an annotated bibliography, and will list sources that you plan to consult in the writing of your paper. While your annotated bibliography may include references to primary material, such as newspaper articles or government documents, the bulk of the references listed should be articles relevant to your topic in *academic journals* or books published by *university presses*. This proposal and the annotated bibliography is worth 10% of your final grade.

By May 12, you will hand in your final research paper by submitting it to NYU Classes. The paper should be 12-15 double-spaced pages, and should include references to academic journal articles and books pertaining to your subject area, as well as some primary sources, such as newspaper articles or policy statements. Please consult NYU's [Citation Style Guide](#) for information about referencing. Either citation style is fine, as long as you are consistent. Please do not ask for any extensions on this final paper. It is important that everyone operate within the same constraints.

Grade Breakdown:

Participation	20%
Writing Assignment 1	15%
Writing Assignment II	20%
Final Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	10%
Final Research Paper	35%

Required Texts: There are no required textbooks for this course.

Assigned Readings: The assigned readings for each week are available through the course website. Supplementary material for each session is sometimes noted. This is for your reference only and is not required. There may be minor adjustments to the assigned readings as the course progresses, which will be communicated well in advance.

Policy on Collaboration: You are encouraged to discuss with one another your approach to the presentations, final paper, and other course requirements, but you must ensure that any material submitted to meet the requirements of the course (including your presentation slides; research prospectus; research presentation; and final research paper) is your own work.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability should speak with the professor as soon as possible (and preferably by the end of the second week of the semester). Failure to do so may result in the instructor’s inability to respond in a timely manner.

Important Dates:

Writing Assignment 1 Due	Friday, February 19
Writing Assignment II Due	Friday, March 26
Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due	Friday, April 9
Final Research Paper Due	Wednesday, May 12

COURSE OUTLINE

Jan 28: Why Study Japan?

This is an introduction to the course and its goals. There are no required readings. We will begin watching the documentary film *Pictures at an Election*. Think about the ways in which election campaigns in Japan differ from the U.S. or other countries.

For Reference:

Steven R. Reed. *Making Common Sense of Japan*. University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh PA, 1993. Chapter 1-2.

Bradley Richardson and Dennis Patterson. Political Traditions and Political Change: The Significance of Postwar Japanese Politics for Political Science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4(1):93–115, 2001.

Andrew Gordon. *A Modern History of Japan. From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, pages 226–243. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.

Ellis S. Krauss and Robert J. Pekkanen. *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP. Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2010. Chapter 1.

Feb 4: Election Campaigns under SNTV

Why does the course begin in 1955? What is Japan's constitutional structure? How did Japan's electoral system work? What are *koenkai* and why were they so important? How did LDP candidates cultivate their *koenkai*? Why are there so many dynastic candidates in Japan?

Peter F. Cowhey and Matthew D. McCubbins. *Structure and Policy in Japan and the United States*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995. pp. 1-10.

Mark Ramseyer and Frances Rosenbluth. *Japan's Political Marketplace*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1993. Chapter 2.

Jean-Marie Bouissou. Organizing One's Support Base under SNTV: The Case of the Japanese *koenkai*. In et al. Bernard Grofman, editor, *Elections in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan under the Single Non-Transferable Vote*, pages 87–120. Michigan University Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1999.

Daniel M. Smith. *Dynasties and Democracy: The Inherited Incumbency Advantage in Japan*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2018. Chapter 4.

Feb 11: Party System Under SNTV

What problems did Japan's electoral system pose for parties seeking a majority? Why were the opposition so unsuccessful? What are prominent explanations for the LDP's dominance and which do you find most convincing?

Gary W. Cox and Emerson Niou. Seat Bonuses under the Single Nontransferable Vote System: Evidence from Japan and Taiwan. *Comparative Politics*, 26(2):221–236, 1994.

Ethan Scheiner. Pipelines of Pork: A Model of Local Opposition Party Failure. *Comparative Political Studies*, 38:799–823, 2005.

Kenneth McElwain. Manipulating Electoral Rules to Manufacture Single-Party Dominance. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(1):32–47, 2008.

Ko Maeda. An Irrational Party of Rational Members: The Collision of Legislators' Reelection Quest with Party Success in the Japan Socialist Party. *Comparative Political Studies*, 45(3):341–365, 2012.

Feb 18: No class (classes meet according to a Monday schedule)

Writing Assignment I Due February 19 via NYU Classes

Feb 25: Pathologies of SNTV: Factions and Corruption

Why are there factions in Japanese politics? Does it pay to be a dirty politician in Japan? How was corruption connected to the electoral system? What other institutions facilitated corruption in Japan?

Ellis S. Krauss and Robert J. Pekkanen. *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP. Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2010. Chapter 4.

Taketsugu Tsurutani. The LDP in transition? Mass membership participation in party leadership selection. *Asian Survey*, 20(8):844–859, 1980.

Benjamin Nyblade and Steven R Reed. Who cheats? Who loots? Political competition and corruption in Japan, 1947–1993. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(4):926–941, 2008.

Mar 4: Governance Under SNTV

In a typical parliamentary system, who holds power over policy? Is Japan a typical parliamentary system? What does it mean to say that Japan had a “bottom-up” policymaking system? How were Prime Ministers chosen and why did they change so often? How does the media influence politics and vice versa?

Aurelia George Mulgan. Japan's Political Leadership Deficit. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 35(2):183–202, 2000.

Ellis S. Krauss and Robert J. Pekkanen. *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP. Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2010. Chapter 8.

Mark Ramseyer and Frances Rosenbluth. *Japan's Political Marketplace*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1993. Chapter 6.

Laurie Anne Freeman. *Closing the Shop: Information Cartels and Japan's Mass Media*. Princeton University Press, 2000. Chapter 1.

Mar 11: Japan's 1994 Electoral Reform

Why do politicians rarely reform the electoral systems under which they are elected? What were the factors that crystallized to produce electoral reform in Japan in 1994? What did the reformers seek to change about Japan's political system? Why didn't the reformers adopt a purely majoritarian or purely proportional electoral system?

Gerald Curtis. *The Logic of Japanese Politics: Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Political Change*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1999. Chapter 2.

Steven R. Reed and Michael Thies. The Causes of Electoral Reform in Japan. In Matthew S. Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg, editors, *Mixed Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?*, pages 152–172. Oxford University Press, New York, 2001.

Takayuki Sakamoto. Explaining Electoral Reform. Japan Versus Italy and New Zealand. *Party Politics*, 5(4):419–438, 1999.

Mar 18: Effects of the Electoral Reform on Campaigns

Were the expectations of reformers borne out in election campaigns? If politicians can rely on their parties under the new system, then why do they still cultivate *koenkai*? What should politicians do between elections to increase their chances of being re-elected under the new system?

Ellis S. Krauss and Robert J. Pekkanen. *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP. Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2010. Chapter 3.

Amy Catalinac. From Pork to Policy: The Rise of Programmatic Campaigning in Japanese Elections. *The Journal of Politics*, 78(1):1–18, 2016.

Ray Christensen and Joel Sawat Selway. Pork-barrel politics and electoral reform: Explaining the curious differences in the experiences of Thailand and Japan. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 76(2):283–310, 2017.

Mar 25: Effects of Electoral Reform on Policy

How was Japan's 1994 electoral reform expected to influence the types of policies that are made? Has it had these effects? Are you convinced that changes in policy areas as diverse as corporate governance, welfare and construction can be traced to electoral reform? If not, why not?

Shigeo Hirano. Electoral Institutions, Hometowns, and Favored Minorities: Evidence from Japanese Electoral Reforms. *World Politics*, 58:51–82, October 2006.

Margarita Estevez-Abe. *Welfare and Capitalism in Postwar Japan*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008. Chapter 9.

Gregory W. Noble. The Decline of Particularism in Japanese Politics. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 10:239–273, 2010.

Frances Rosenbluth and Michael F Thies. The Electoral Foundations of Japan's Banking Regulation. *Policy Studies Journal*, 29(1):23–37, 2001.

Writing Assignment II Due March 26 via NYU Classes

Apr 1: Fall of the LDP and Rise of the DPJ

What were the events that led up to the DPJ's victory in 2009? Why did it take 15 years after electoral reform for an alternation in power to occur? What was responsible for the DPJ's success in 2009 – savvy party leaders, swing voters, the economic crisis, or the LDP's own failures?

T. J. Pempel. Between Pork and Productivity: The Collapse of the Liberal Democratic Party. *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 36(2):227–254, 2010.

Steven R. Reed, Ethan Scheiner, and Michael F. Thies. The End of LDP Dominance and the Rise of Party-oriented Politics in Japan. *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 38(2):353–375, 2012.

Kenji E Kushida and Phillip Y Lipsky. *Japan under the DPJ: The Politics of Transition and Governance*. Shorenstein APARC and Brookings Institution Press Washington, DC, 2013. pp. 3–42.

Apr 8: Hot Button Issue: Are We Back to One-Party Dominance?

By 2012, the LDP was back in power; why? What has happened to the party system since 2012? What are the sources of LDP strength and opposition weakness? What role does the Komeito play?

Steve Reed and Yukio Maeda. The LDP under Abe. In Takeo Hoshi and Phillip Y. Lipscy, editors, *The Political Economy of the Abe Government and Abenomics Reforms*, pages 1–19. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2021.

Adam P Liff and Ko Maeda. Electoral incentives, policy compromise, and coalition durability: Japan’s LDP–Komeito government in a mixed electoral system. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 20(1):53–73, 2019.

Amy Catalinac and Lucia Motolinia. Geographically-Targeted Spending in Mixed-Member Majoritarian Electoral Systems. *Working Paper*, 2021.

Robert J Pekkanen and Steven R Reed. The Opposition: From Third Party Back to Third Force. In *Japan Decides 2017*, pages 77–92. Springer, 2018.

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due April 9 via NYU Classes

Apr 15: Hot button issue: Is Japan Able to Exercise Decisive Leadership?

In the late 1990s, the Japanese government embarked on a process of reforming its governance and policymaking structures. At the same time, the LDP has changed the way it chooses its leaders. How has this changed the types of leaders who are elected? Have all leaders been able to take advantage of these reforms? Is Japan able to exercise decisive leadership?

Hironori Sasada. The electoral origin of Japan’s nationalistic leadership: primaries in the LDP presidential election and the “pull effect”. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 10:1–30, 2010.

Harukata Takenaka. Expansion of the Prime Minister’s Power in the Japanese Parliamentary System: Transformation of Japanese Politics and Institutional Reforms. *Asian Survey*, 59(5):844–869, 2019.

Tina Burrett. Abe Road: Comparing Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s leadership of his first and second governments. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 70(2):400–429, 2017.

Apr 22: Hot button issue: Will Japan Revise its Constitution?

Article Nine and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty are the bedrocks of Japanese security policy. What are they and why have they lasted so long? Why is constitutional revision on the agenda? Why does history continue to haunt Japan's relations with its neighbors? Is it time for Japan to revise its approach to national security?

Kenneth Mori McElwain and Christian G Winkler. What's Unique about the Japanese Constitution? A Comparative and Historical Analysis. *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, pages 249–280, 2015.

Gerald L Curtis. Japan's cautious hawks: Why Tokyo is unlikely to pursue an aggressive foreign policy. *Foreign Aff.*, 92:77, 2013.

Shogo Suzuki and Corey Wallace. Explaining Japan's response to geopolitical vulnerability. *International Affairs*, 94(4):711–734, 2018.

Jennifer Lind. The haunt of history in Japan's foreign relations. *Handbook of Japanese Politics, London: Routledge*, pages 309–19, 2011.

Apr 29: Hot button issue: Can Japan Manage its Demographic Challenges?

Let us take stock of the demographic challenges in contemporary Japan. What solutions are on offer? Why has Japan been reluctant to embrace foreign workers? How do its policies to promote women's advancement stack up against those of other countries, and what could explain these differences?

Hidekazu Inagawa. Introduction. In Takeo Hoshi and Phillip Y. Lipscy, editors, *Japan's Population Implosion: The 50 Million Shock*, pages 1–25. Springer, 2018.

Michael Orlando Sharpe. What does blood membership mean in political terms?: The political incorporation of Latin American Nikkeijin (Japanese Descendants) (LAN) in Japan 1990-2004. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 12(1):113, 2011.

Margarita Estévez-Abe. An International Comparison of Gender Equality: Why is the Japanese gender gap so persistent? *Japan Labor Review*, 10(2):82–100, 2013.

Emma Dalton. Womenomics, 'equality' and Abe's Neo-liberal strategy to make Japanese Women shine. *Social Science Japan Journal*, 20(1):95–105, 2017.

May 6: No class (professor is available to meet about final research papers)

Final Research Paper Due May 12 via NYU Classes
