Japanese Politics
（日本政治）
Winter 2010
17:00-19:50 pm (Thu)
Room CENTR 109

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Syllabus V.1 (As of January 4, 2010—Please Check for Updates)

This course will introduce you to important puzzles/questions about Japanese politics, discuss various ways in which scholars have attempted to solve these puzzles, and suggest pathways for future research. In the process of trying to solve these puzzles, we will learn: (i) important actors in Japanese politics (e.g., politicians and political parties, bureaucrats, firms and citizens), (ii) the positions that different actors take with respect to various policies, as well as the sources of these policy preferences and changes over time, and (iii) how political institutions such as electoral systems and parliamentary committee systems block or enhance the representation of these actors’ interests.

The class will *not* emphasize the rote memorization of facts (although you will need to know the basic facts in order to understand why things happened the way that they did), nor will it emphasize the simple digestion of big-picture scholarly debates. The focus of this class will be on learning how to conduct critical and in-depth analysis of policy and political events in Japan, and gaining the practical skills necessary to do your own your independent research. By the end of this class, you should be able to read news on Japanese politics and be (better) able to assess: (i) who are the major players in the event (“actors”), (ii) what these actors wanted (“policy preferences”), (iii) the relative balance of power among these actors (“power and influence”), and (iv) why some actors won over others (“explaining policy outcomes”).

Consistent with this goal, there will be no multiple-choice questions on the midterm and final exams, which will be open-book, take-home essays.

**Requirements**

(1) Readings and Attendance

I will assign three articles or chapters (60-100 pages) each week. Readings are available on e-reserve at: XX. To do well on the exams, you must read the assigned materials carefully before the class, attend class each week, and be prepared to discuss the readings.
analytically and critically in your essays.

(2) Discussion Section 10% of final course grade

During the first class, I will ask you to sign up for one of the nine “discussion sections” during the course. For the last 30 minutes of each class, we will discuss a question written on the syllabus with each group. I will keep a record of your attendance and you are required to talk and participate. I also welcome participation of students who did not sign up for that week although this optional attendance will not substitute for the required attendance for the week you signed up for officially. The discussion sections will give you an opportunity to read and discuss readings more closely and critically, and to interact with other students and me in a smaller setting (a bit like a graduate program).

(3) Midterm Essays (Due February 11) 30% of final course grade

You are required to complete two essays. The first essay will ask you to contrast two to three theories we will cover to explain one of the five puzzles we discuss in the class between January 7th and February 4th (chosen by lottery in the class) and to discuss each theory’s strengths and weaknesses. The second essay question will describe a political event that actually happened in Japan recently using newspaper articles and ask you to identify actors, preferences, and the relative power balance, and then provide your explanation for why a particular policy was adopted. You are free to consult materials outside of the class readings, such as journal articles, books or newspaper articles. On February 4th, I will explain strategies for dealing with this assignment using an example.

Questions will be distributed in class on February 4th (Thu) and essays will be due at the beginning of the class on February 11 (Thu).

(4) Final Essays (distributed Week 9 and due finals week) 50% of final course grade

Same format as the midterm. The “puzzle” will be chosen by lottery from the five puzzles we will discuss in the class after the midterm. Final questions will be distributed in class on March 4th (Thu) and essays will be due by 11 am, March 18th (Thu).

(5) Class Participation 10% of final course grade

Although this is a big large lecture-style class, my aim is to make the class as interactive as possible so that we have a more proactive and fun learning experience. You are encouraged to ask questions and comment on the readings during class.
CLASS POLICY

Extensions

Extensions for the midterm and final essays may be given on a case-by-case basis. You must have a documented reason (i.e., medical, extenuating personal circumstances, etc.) for not being able to turn in an assignment on time. You will need to bring in supporting documentation to be granted an extension.

Grade Appeals

You have one week after I return the essays to appeal the grade. All appeals must be made to your TA. You must submit a typed, double-spaced, statement explaining why you are requesting a grade appeal and justify it with evidence from your essays and class participation. If you choose to appeal your grade, your TA reserves the right to decrease the existing grade. His decision is final.

Assignments/Late Papers

Note that we will not accept any email submission of your essays. We will, however, accept late assignments in our mailboxes, which are located on the third floor of the Social Sciences Building. Late essays will be penalized one third of a grade per day (e.g., an A-paper becomes B+ the next day) until it bottoms at C. Note that essays that are turned in after 5 pm on Friday will not be counted as turned in until Monday morning. Late papers will not be accepted past noon on the Monday following the deadline.

Academic Honesty

Cheating, plagiarism and other violations of academic honesty are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. Midterm and final essays are not collaborative efforts in this class. You must work independently on all essays. Please refer to the UCSD policy on integrity of scholarship for further details. If you are caught cheating in this course (this includes plagiarism), you will be awarded a letter grade of an F. I reserve the right to check your essays electronically when necessary.

January 7: Overview of the Class, Logistics & Documentary

(a) Overview of the syllabus & logistics
(b) Documentary—"Campaign (Senkyo)"
(c) Sign-up for a discussion section

Puzzle 1: Are Japanese politics “unique” or “different” from other advanced industrialized nations (e.g., the United States)? If so, how? If not, what are the similarities?
Discussion Questions: What are the similarities and differences between Japanese election campaigns (refer to Curtis 1992, pp. 222-243; Kollner 2007; & the documentary) and the U.S. versions? What are the possible explanations (“theories”) for these similarities and differences?

Readings:


**January 14: Explaining Economic Growth**

Puzzle 2. “Miraculous” Economic Growth and Stagnation in the 1990s

(a) The Question: Bureaucrats or Market?


(b) Case Study: Automobile Industry


(c) Stagnation in the 1990s: Bureaucrats, Politicians, or Market Revisited

No readings. Lecture.

Discussion Questions: What roles did politicians play in making miraculous economic growth possible? Do the readings assigned this week talk about it? If not, why not?

**January 21: The Rise of Inequality in the 1990s—Globalization or Aging Society?**

Puzzle 3. Egalitarian Development and the Rise of Inequality in the 1990s
(a) The Question: Equality Made by Government or Society?


(b) The Rise of Inequality in the 1990s


(c) Case Study— The Government’s Response to Youth Unemployment (“NEET”)


Discussion Questions: In the U.S., the question of to what extent a government should respond to widening inequality is a highly partisan issue. How do the politics of inequality play out in Japan where there was no major partisan turnover before 2009? Who contributed to the reduction and widening of inequality? Bureaucrats, politicians, businesses, or labor? How about the citizens?

January 28: The Survival of the Liberal Democratic Party

Puzzle 4: The Long-term Survival of the Liberal Democratic Party

(a) The Question: Clientelism or Flexible Adaptation?


(b) Changes since the 1990s: Recession, Coalition Government, and Electoral Reform

Guest Lecture: Dan Smith (Ph.D. Candidate, Dept. of Political Science, UCSD)

Discussion Questions: What are the existing explanations for the long-term LDP dominance? Which theory can *also* account for the popularity of Koizumi (2001-2006)?

**February 4: The Power Shift? The Victory of Democratic Party of Japan in 2009**

**Distribution of Midterm Questions**

Puzzle 5: What Happened to the LDP? Why the DPJ Victory?

(a) The Question: Electoral Reform, Economic and Social Changes, or a “DPJ Flu?”


Kohno, Masaru. 1997. “Electoral Origins of Japanese Socialists’ Stagnation.” *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 30, No. 1, 55-77. (Note: This article is about the Japanese Socialist Party, a *partial* predecessor of the DPJ, not about the DPJ—but will help us understand how DPJ escaped from this stagnation...or not).

(b) Case Study: A Closer Look at the 2009 Election

Reading TBA. Lecture & our findings from pre-election & post-election legislator surveys.

(c) Midterm Study Guidance

Discussion Questions: Why did the DPJ win this time? Who were responsible for the success? DPJ’s party leaders, swing voters, recession, or just the LDP’s abysmal performance?

**February 11: Politics of Gender Inequality**

**Midterm Essays Due in Class**

Puzzle 6. Gender Gap in the Workplace and at Home

(a) The Question: Policy/Institutions, Economy or Culture?


(b) Case Study: The New Politics of Low Fertility and “Child Subsidies” under DPJ

Discussion Questions: Who benefits and who loses from declining fertility in Japan? What can a government do to increase fertility?

(Another potential discussion Q) After the electoral reform of 1994, the proportion of female legislators in the Lower House increased more than four times (2.7% in 1993; 11.3% in 2009—I will cover this in the lecture). What are possible explanations for this increase? Do you think an increase in female representation in a legislature has effects on what types of policies are enacted?

**February 18: Japan's Post-War Security Policy**

Puzzle 7. Why does Japan not have an independent military or nuclear weapon?

(a) The Question: Article 9—Strategy or Norm?


(b) Case Study—Peace Keeping Operation Debates & the New DPJ Coalition Government

Discussion Questions: Should Japan become a “normal state?” What are the pros and cons of having a stronger & more independent military?

**February 25: War Apologies and Sino-Japan Relations**

Puzzle 8. Why are war apologies still the center of diplomatic disputes between Japan and China/Korea?

(a) The Question: Apologies—Cheap Talk or Costly Signal?


(b) Case Study: Yasukuni Shrine (Documentary and Discussion)

Discussion Questions: Should the Japanese government apologize more for the past war crimes? If so, how?

**March 4: Coping with Globalization (1): Conservative Immigration Policy**

**Distribution of Final Exams**

Puzzle 8. Why does Japan have one of the lowest proportions of foreign workers and immigrants among the advanced industrial nations?

(a) The Question: Protectionism or Xenophobia?


(b) Case study: Legal and Illegal Migration in Japan (Documentary)

(c) Distribution of Final Exam & Q/A Session (Note: Guidance to follow the next week)

Discussion Questions: Should Japan open its labor market to foreign workers? What are the pros and cons of a more open labor market for various actors—the Japanese government, businesses, labor, politicians, and citizens?

**March 11: Coping with Globalization (2): Agricultural Protectionism**

Puzzle 9. Why do Japanese consumers bear very high prices for agricultural products?
The Question: Protectionism or Food Nationalism?


Discussion Questions: Should Japan import more food from abroad? What are the obstacles to importing more foreign food? Who benefits from more import?

**Final Essays Due by 11am, March 18th in TAs’ Mailboxes**