133A: Japanese Politics

Winter 2018, CENTR 119
Tues/Thurs, 11:00 am -12:20 pm

| Office Office Hours E-mail | Prof. Megumi Naoi SSB 373 Fri: 1:00-3:00 pm mnaoi@ucsd.edu | TA: Charlie McClean SSB 346 Tues: 12:30-1:30 pm cmcclean@ucsd.edu | TA: Jiying Jiang SSB 331 Mon: 10:00-11:00 am jij090@ucsd.edu | TA: TBA |

Course Website: https://tritoned.ucsd.edu (Search for Instructor “Naoi”) All lectures are podcasted.

Important Dates & Deadlines:

**February 8 (Thurs): Reading and Lecture Quiz (Puzzles 1-4):** Reading and Lecture Quiz I. In-class, closed book quiz on the readings and lectures covering Puzzles 1 to 4. Paper-based, mostly multiple choice & fill in blanks. 40% of your grade.

**March 20 (Tues):** Submit a hard copy of final essays (take-home, open book) between 2pm-2:30pm in our class. 60% of your grade. Final essay prompt will be distributed on February 27 (Tues).

**Bonus points, maximum 10 points.** Two ways to earn bonus points – (i) winning Q and A challenge, or, (ii) regularly contribute to class discussion. See details under “Requirements” section.

About this Course

This course will introduce you to nine important puzzles/questions about Japanese politics, discuss various ways in which scholars have attempted to solve these puzzles, and suggest pathways for future research.

*Part I: Foundations of Japanese Politics*

Puzzle 1. Are Japanese politics “unique” or “different” from other developed nations (e.g., the United States)?
Puzzle 2. The Long-term Survival of the Liberal Democratic Party
Puzzle 3. “Miraculous” Economic Growth and Stagnation in the 1990s
Puzzle 4. Egalitarian Development and the Rise of Inequality in the 1990s

*Part II: Explaining Public Policy Outcomes (Applied)*

Puzzle 5. Gender gap in the workplace and at home
Puzzle 6. Why was there no large-scale civil society movement against nuclear energy despite the Fukushima disaster?
Puzzle 7. Do Japanese consumers “prefer” higher-priced domestic food? If so, why?
Puzzle 8. Territorial conflicts and constitutional revision
Puzzle 9. Why does the Japanese government accept low skilled, foreign workers through a temporary, internship program?

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;
(iii) How political institutions such as electoral systems and party 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 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”).

Requirements

(1) Readings and Lecture Quiz (40%)

On Readings: I will assign three articles or chapters (60-100 pages) each week. Readings are available on our course website at: https://tritoned.ucsd.edu. To do well on the exams (i.e., better grade than B), 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.

On Reading/Lecture Quiz (Feb 8): It will be a paper-based test with multiple-choice questions that cover readings and lectures. Very straight-forward, no trick questions or factual trivia questions.

(2) Final Essays (60%)

Take-home, open book, and open-discussion. About 8-10 pages. Questions are distributed on February 27 (Tues) and due March 20 (Tues), between 2 pm-2:30 pm in the class.
You are required to complete two essays. The first essay will ask you to contrast two to three theories covered in class in order to explain one of the five puzzles (Puzzles 5 to 9) in the latter half of the course (the specific puzzle will be 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 will 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 (but NOT Wikipedia).

(3) Bonus points, Maximum 10 points. Two ways to earn 10 points.

(i) Q and A Challenge!

During our class, you will receive five bonus points for asking an interesting question on Japanese politics that I cannot answer off the top of my head. “An interesting question” should NOT be a factual, trivia question (e.g., what is the name of Shinjiro Koizumi’s girlfriend?). The question should NOT be about the future, either, because we are not prophets. The question must make us think and require some research and interpretation of evidence to answer (which I call “mini-research”).

You will also receive five more points for presenting your mini-research for 5 minutes in the class answering the question the following week. Mini-research is open to anyone in the class, whether you asked or did not ask the particular question. For “mini-research” projects, you will need to spend at least 30 minutes doing research and making power point slides summarizing what you found (see possible sources of information at the end of this syllabus). Please upload your mini-research slides on our TritonED website at latest 20 minutes before the lecture. See the template for mini-research presentation at the end of this syllabus.

(ii) Participation points

10 Points: You ask good questions or make good comments regularly (about once a week).
5 Points: You ask good questions or make good comments sometimes (about once every other week)

CLASS POLICY

Extensions and Quiz Retake

(1) You must request an extension or quiz retake before the deadline or at the latest an hour before the quiz.

(2) You must have a documented reason (i.e., medical, extenuating personal circumstances, etc.) for not being able to turn in an assignment or quiz on time. You will need to bring in supporting documentation to be granted an extension. Please note that UCSD Students Health Services no longer provide “medical excuses” except under extreme circumstances (i.e., severe, prolonged illness that necessitates dropping a class or obtaining specific accommodations for class/lab participation, test taking or make-up). If you are sick but don’t have money to visit your primary care physician, try to document
things that you can later show me as an evidence (e.g., a photo of thermometer with date & time, your message to your mom saying you are too sick to go to exam, also date & time stamped, etc.

Assignments/Late Papers

Note that we will not accept any email submission of your essays. We will, however, accept late final exams 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 of three days after the deadline.

Academic Honesty

Cheating, plagiarism, and other violations of academic honesty are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. 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 receive a letter grade of F. I reserve the right to check your essays electronically when necessary.
January 9 (Tues): Overview of the Class and Logistics

(a) Overview of the syllabus & logistics
(b) Introduction to the documentary—“Campaign (Senkyo)”

PART I: Foundations of Japanese Politics

Week 1: The Election Campaigning, Japanese Style?

January 9 & 11

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?

Documentary—“Campaign (Senkyo)” (each class we watch this documentary for the first 40 minutes; followed by 20 minutes Q and As)

Discussion Questions: What are the similarities and differences between Japanese election campaigns (refer to Curtis 1992, pp. 222-243 & the documentary) and the U.S. versions? What are the possible explanations (“theories”) for these similarities and differences?

Readings:


Also see background materials on PBS Website:
http://www.pbs.org/pov/campaign/campaign_background.php

Week 2: The Survival of the Liberal Democratic Party

January 16 & 18

Puzzle 2. 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


Discussion Questions: What are the existing explanations for the long-term LDP dominance?

**Week 3: Explaining Economic Growth**

**January 23 & 25**

*Puzzle 3. “Miraculous” Economic Growth and Stagnation in the 1990s*

(a) The Question: Bureaucrats or Market?


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


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

**Week 4: Why Egalitarian Development and its Demise in the 1990s?**

**January 30 & February 1**

*Puzzle 4. 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— Hikikomori and NEET Problems


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?

**Week 5: Review & Getting Ready for the Quiz**

February 6 (Tues): Q and A session for Upcoming Quiz

**February 8 (Thurs): Reading and Lecture Quiz (Puzzles 1-4)**

**PART II: Explaining Public Policy Outcomes (Applied)**

**Week 6: Gender Inequality**

February 13 & 15

**Puzzle 5. Gender Gap in the Workplace and at Home**

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


(b) Case Study: Daycare Wait-list Problem and Government Responses


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

**Week 7: Energy Policy—Nuclear and Its Alternatives after 3.11**

February 20 & 22

*Puzzle 6. Japanese citizens have been known to oppose having nuclear weapons. Despite this sentiment and the Fukushima disaster, we have not seen a large-scale civil society movement against nuclear energy or many politicians pledging to reduce nuclear energy. Why?*

(a) The Question: Nuclear Energy in the Nuclear-Allergy State


**Week 8: Agricultural Protectionism**

February 27 & March 1

**DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL ESSAY PROMPT**

*Puzzle 7. Do Japanese consumers “prefer” higher-priced domestic food?*

(a) The Question: Protectionism or Food Nationalism?


(b) Case Study: The politics of Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

No reading. Lecture.

**Week 9: Territorial Conflicts and Constitutional Revision**

March 6 & 8
Puzzle 8. What motivates the Japanese government to take an aggressive position on territorial disputes with South Korea and China?


**Views from South Korea (Optional)**


**Week 10: Immigration**

March 13 & 15

Puzzle 9. Why does the Japanese government accept low-skilled, foreign workers through a temporary, internship program?


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

**Final Essays Due March 20 (Tues) between 2 pm -2:30 pm at the class. We allow early hardcopy submission, not electronic submission.**

**Template for Analyzing Politics and Policy Outcomes**

1. **Identify relevant actors.** Usual suspects: politicians, political parties, bureaucrats, interest groups (business, farmers, doctors, etc.), voters, media, NGOs, foreign governments, etc.

2. **Lay out what these actors want** (i.e., policy positions) **and why** (votes, money, power, ideology, culture, etc.). If there is a divergence of preferred policy options among actors
(even within the same political party, bureaucracy, or industry etc), or ambiguity of policy positions, discuss them.

It is important not to “settle down” quickly with the conventional wisdom or cursory reporting of the news media. Keep asking yourself, are you really convinced? If not, you can point to the ambiguity and discuss what you are not sure about. What the class needs to hear is not the facts or the correct answer. It is your thought process based on the materials you found. Use your imagination, too, just like when you read a novel: if you were in his/her shoes, what policy would you prefer?

Useful Tips: When discussing politicians, think about their three common incentives: votes, seats, and policy. Mobilizing campaign donations (money) often helps them get reelected, too.

It is sometimes unclear what bureaucrats want. Some scholars argued they want to maximize their budget, staff members, and jurisdictions (Niskanen). Others have argued that they are committed to realize their ideal policies.

Industries and firms generally want to maximize their income, but they sometimes diverge from this prediction due to imperfect information and market failure.

There are also psychological theories on why people (appear to) behave irrationally. See Naoi & Kume, 2011 on agricultural protectionism.

(3) **Power**: Whose opinions are likely to be reflected in the policy-making process and why? This gets to the question regarding various sources of power that industries and citizens have: votes, money, power to organize (e.g., concentration and intensity of interests), information, legitimacy, etc. Institutions, such as electoral systems and party systems, can empower some actors and disempower others. Socio-economic organizations, such as labor unions and industry associations, can also shape their bargaining power over policies. We cover these topics in the Part I: Foundations of Japanese Politics.

(4) **“Good analysis” will**: (i) go beyond what news reports said, and discuss what they did not report or any ambiguity that is left in the newspaper articles and (ii) discuss the difference between what the readings (or, “theories”) will predict and what you found in your research, (iii) provide some critiques of the readings (or, “theories”) based on (i) and (ii).

**Sources for your original research:**

Please do not cite Wikipedia. As Michael Scott (in the TV show “The Office”) said: “Wikipedia is the best thing ever. Anyone in the world can write anything they want about any subject…you know you are getting the best possible information”. **NOT. You will get one point deduction each time you cite Wikipedia in your final essays.**

**Scholarly Articles:**

http://scholar.google.com/
Citation counts relative to when it was published is a good proxy for the impact and quality of the article and/or the book.

**Newspaper Articles:**

Factiva and Lexis Nexis Academic are the two best sources for English-language news on Japan. Factiva also has Japanese-language newspaper article as well. Go to UCSD library website (http://libraries.ucsd.edu) and type in “Factiva” in the search window.