This is a course on the history of Japan from the 19th century to the present day. Emphasis will be placed on Japan’s society and culture (highlighting fiction and film) but will also note Japan’s economic development (today is world’s third top economic power), and Japan’s changing role in the international sphere: how Japan quickly emerged from isolated feudalism in the mid-19th century to become the most powerful empire in Asia, and then after 1945 how Japan became a major exporter, foreign investor, and aid/expertise provider. By the 1990s Japan’s economic dominance prompted the title “Japan As Number One” for Prof. Ezra Vogel’s famous 1999 book. But in the 2000s and especially since the “Triple Strikes” of March 11, 2011, Japan has faced serious challenges at home (recession, aging population and declining birth rate, shrinking social safety nets, high suicide rate) and in the region (for example, with regards to China, the two Koreas and Southeast Asia), and internationally (relations with the US; the war on terror, global agreements such as TPP, etc.) Can “Abenomics” and other policies of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s government together with the Japanese people not only “bring Japan back” but also radically transform their country for the 21st century?

Course Objectives

This is a survey course of modern Japanese history. As such, it aims to give you a basic understanding of the major events, themes, and personages of modern Japanese history. Major themes include: life during the Tokugawa era; how Japan became a modern nation-state and how Japanese formed their national identity (and the inherent problems lasting until the present); Japanese imperialism; and Japan’s post-war economic and social development. When studying history, in addition to the survey approach, it’s fruitful and
fascinating to delve into special topics. Along the way, we will enjoy some gems of Japanese literature and film and, in the later weeks of the semester we will examine “Japan’s Gross National Cool;” the March 11.2011 “Triple Strikes”; “Precarious Japan”; and Controversies on “Comfort Women.”

Readings


(Referred to below as Hane and Perez)

3. Other required readings, both fiction and non-fiction, are listed on Sakai. We will also watch film clips.

Grading

~Two quizzes: 10% total for both

~Class attendance and individual participation: 15%

~Sakai postings and Sakai class discussion’s leadership: 20%

~Three response papers, 750 words each: 30% [10% each]. Formatting: 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced.

~One primary source (in English or Japanese) evaluation, 750 words: 10%

~Final Take-home assignment comprised of essays on the entire semester’s content: 15%

Grading Scheme:

94-100, A

90-93, A-

87-89, B+

84-86, B

80-83, B-

(Etc)

COURSE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

*Academic Integrity:
Each student is bound by the academic honesty standard of the Duke University: “As a student at Duke University, I pledge to support and uphold the Duke Community Standard which states: “I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors; I will conduct myself honorably in all my endeavors; and, I will act if the Standard is compromised.” For information on what constitutes “plagiarism, see [http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/](http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/). If you or I suspect anyone of violating the Community Standard, we will contact the Office of Student Conduct and proceedings will immediately begin.

*Class Attendance:

Each student has three “free” absences per semester. Any more than this will result in a grade penalty.

These absences could cover illness, job interviews, other personal obligations.

For illness you STILL must fill out the Short Term Illness Notification Form. Except in the case of long-term illness, using the STINF will still count toward one of your absences.

See [http://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/illness](http://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/illness)

**Policy on Phones and other Electronic devices**

~I prohibit the use of mobile phones in class. Turn them off during class. Cell phone noises of any kind disturb the instructor and the whole class. If you use your cell-phone during class, I will lower your grades immediately.

~Tablets and laptops can be used during class but ONLY for taking notes and doing readings and assignments as instructed by the professor.

~But use of your tablets and laptops for email, social media sites, and web-surfing IS PROHIBITED, and such actions will lower your grades immediately.

*Let’s avoid the embarrassment that will ensue for everyone if I hear your cell phone or see you surfing in class.*

**Other**

~I will send you Sakai-generated emails from time to time, about assignments and other important information. Keep an eye out for these and be sure to read them promptly.

~Food and drink: Refrain from food, it tends to disrupt the learning environment. Beverages are OK.

**Weekly Schedule**

Jan 15: Self-introductions and course overview; Brainstorm on “Japan;” Framing 20th Century Japan: A Top Ten List” (see Sakai).
Homework: As you read Chapters 2-4 in Hane and Perez, make a list of what you decide are “Keywords” (in English and/or Japanese) to the understanding of these chapters, and we’ll discuss next week. Don’t worry if you cannot pronounce the Japanese, it’s the meaning that’s important here.

Jan 20 and Jan 22: The Tokugawa Bakufu

For Wed, read Hane and Perez Chapter 2 and for Friday, read Hane and Perez, Chapters 3 and 4.

Jan 27 and Jan 29: The Meiji Restoration

For Wed, read Hane and Perez, Chapters 5-6. For Fri, Hane and Perez Chapters 8-9.

Feb 3 and Feb 5: Society in Meiji Japan

Hane and Perez, Chapter 7 and other Sakai readings.

Focus: Workers, rural society, “outcastes...”

Feb 10 and Feb 12: Society and Politics in the Taisho Era

Hane and Perez, Chs. 10 and pp. 239-256

Focus: Democracy and its discontents

Feb 17 and Feb 19: Culture in the Taisho Era

Hane and Perez, pp.-231-9; other readings on Sakai

Focus: “The Modern Woman;” fiction by women

Feb 24 and Feb 26: War and Empire (1)

Hane and Perez, Chs. 12-13

March 2 and March 4: War and Empire (11)

Hane and Perez, Ch. 14


March 9 and March 11: Post-war Years: Reform and Reconstruction

Hane and Perez, Ch. 15

No classes Wed March 16 or Friday March 18

March 23 and March 25: Postwar Years: Politics, Economy, Foreign Affairs
Hane and Perez, Ch. 16

March 30 and April 1: The “March 11, 2011” Triple Strikes


April 6 and April 8: Japan’s “Gross National Cool” (Japanese pop culture at home and abroad)

Various readings on Sakai

April 13 and April 15: “Precarious Japan”


April 20 and April 22: “Comfort Women” controversies

Various readings on Sakai

Wed. April 27: Last day of class: Wrap-up

Thursday, May 5, 2016: Final take-home assignment due (several long essays on broad themes of our semester), please upload to Sakai by 5 PM. I am unable to accept late submissions.