Miyazaki International University

Course Syllabus

Spring 2023

| Course Title (Credits) | **POL309-1 Politics of Japan** |
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| Course Designation for TC | N/A |
| Content Teacher |
| Instructor | Rui Saraiva, Ph.D. |
| E-mail address | rsaraiva@sky.miyazaki-mic.ac.jp |
| Office/Ext | MIC2-202 / Ext 3771 |
| Office hours | Mondays 15:00-16:00 & Wednesdays 14:30-16:30 |

| **Course Description:** |
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| This course provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of politics in Japan, covering its political institutions, actors, and challenges. It explores various topics, including political leadership, electoral and party systems, civil society movements, and economic, foreign, and security policies, to comprehensively understand contemporary Japanese politics. |
| **Course Objectives:** |
| * Upon completing this course, students will have a deeper understanding of Japan’s political, social, and cultural contexts and how to address the challenges facing its political system in the 21st century.
* Students will also develop critical thinking skills in the field of Japanese politics, as well as clear communication and analytical skills for expressing and discussing their evidence-based analyses.
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| **Course Schedule:** |
| **Day** | **Topic** | **Content/Activities** |
| **1** | Introduction  | Introduction to contemporary Japanese politics |
| **2** | The current political challenges in Japan: Entering a period of political instability? |
| **3** | Political parties | Political parties and the Japanese Diet |
| **4** | The 1955 Japanese political system. Two-party or multi-party system? |
| **5** | Political opposition | Political opposition and alternation in power |
| **6** | Taking a look at the Japanese democracy in the 21st century |
| **7** | Political leadership | Political leadership, the Prime-Minister, and the Cabinet |
| **8** | Taking a closer look at the incumbent government and its political leadership |
| **9** | Electoral system and local politics | Japan’s electoral system and local politics |
| **10** | The centralization versus decentralization debate |
| **11** | Policymaking and bureaucracy | Japan’s policymaking process and the role of bureaucracy |
| **12** | Koizumi’s structural reform and Abenomics: What’s next? |
| **13** | Political economy | Japan’s political economy |
| **14** | From miracle economic growth to a stagnant economy: What is Japan’s 21st-century sustainable development model? |
| **15** | Civil society and public opinion | Civil Society and public opinion in Japan |
| **16** | Political activism, social movements, and youth engagement |
| **17** | Human rights and human security | Social, ethnic, and gender inequalities in Japan |
| **18** | How are human rights issues being handled in Japan? |
| **19** | Immigration policy | Japan’s immigration policy |
| **20** | A changing Japan amid globalization and aging society? |
| **21** | Security policy | Japan’s security policy |
| **22** | Normalization or remilitarization? |
| **23** | Foreign policy | Japan’s foreign policy and Official Development Assistance (ODA) |
| **24** | What is Japan’s national interest and what is human security? |
| **25** | Japan and the “West” | Japan-US and Japan-EU relations |
| **26** | Is Japan drifting away from its Western allies? |
| **27** | Japan and the Indo-Pacific | Japan relations in the Indo-Pacific region |
| **28** | How relevant is Japan’s new plan for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)”? |
| **29** | Japan, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America | Japan’s engagement with Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America |
| **30** | How would you describe Japan's political values in the 21st century? |
| **Materials:** |
| Book chapters, short articles or relevant reading materials will be provided by the instructor. Suggested textbooks:* Pekkanen Robert and Saadia M Pekkanen. 2022. The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics. New York NY: Oxford University Press.
* Gaunder Alisa. 2011. The Routledge Handbook of Japanese Politics. London: Routledge.
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| **Course Policies (Attendance, etc.)** |
| * Your participation is crucial to the success of this course. Before joining the class, please make sure to finish the reading materials or homework given by the instructor.
* Your withdrawal from the course will be recommended after five unexcused absences.
* Make sure you arrive on time. Absences will be recorded if you are more than 20 minutes late.
* It is crucial to take plagiarism seriously. In the event that a student violates the Institution's Academic Honesty Guidelines, they may fail their assignments or courses.
* Please properly cite other authors in your midterm and final papers. Political science relies on primary or secondary data. Therefore, you should not copy ideas from other authors, books, reports, articles, etc., and claim them as your own.
* Office Hours: You are welcome to discuss the course materials, assignments, readings, etc., with me. If you would like to make an appointment, please send an email (please wait for a response within one business day).
* Politics can be a highly sensitive topic because it involves the exercise of power and influence over people’s lives and well-being. Political decisions often have far-reaching consequences, and different groups may have competing interests and perspectives on how resources should be allocated, laws enforced, or policies implemented. In this context, **there will be no tolerance for harassment or discrimination of any kind**.
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| **Class Preparation and Review** |
| Students should spend at least one hour reviewing and doing homework to prepare for each lesson. |
| **Grades and Grading Standards** |
| * In-Class participation: 20%
* Assignments and presentations: 20%
* Mid-term paper (500-750 words): 30%
* Final examination: 30%
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| **Methods of Feedback:** |
| In principle, graded work will be returned within one week of submission with appropriate feedback, i.e., grade, comments, etc. |
| **Diploma Policy Objectives:** |
| Work completed in this course helps students achieve the following Diploma Policy objective(s):1. Advanced thinking skills (comparison, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) based on critical thinking (critical and analytic thought) 2. The ability to understand and accept different cultures developed through acquisition of a broad knowledge and comparison of the cultures of Japan and other nations3. The ability to identify and solve problems4. Advanced communicative proficiency in both Japanese and English5: Proficiency in the use of information technology |
| **Notes:** |
| Throughout the semester, I reserve the right to modify the syllabus as necessary. |