

The Social History of Postwar Japan

Friday 1st Period

Instructor:

Earl Kinmonth

Relation to Other Courses:

This is a stand alone course. It is not directly related to other courses on offer at this university.

Prerequisites:

None.

Theme:

The Historical Development of the Contemporary Japanese Lifestyle

Outcomes:

Students will be able to explain how, when, and why various patterns that dominate life in contemporary Japan developed.

Students will be able to debunk common assertions about social problems and social structures that appear in both domestic and foreign news sources.

Description:

This course is a broad overview of the social history of Japan in the second half of the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century up to the present. The emphasis is on change and continuity in how the majority of Japanese have lived their lives.

It attempts to answer three basic questions:

- 1) why is a distinction made between prewar and postwar Japan;
- 2) how was Japan changed by the Pacific War;
- 3) what has changed in the nearly seventy years since the end of the war. The course is intended to provide both Japanese and foreign students with a sense of how, when and why many of the patterns to be seen in contemporary Japan developed and how they differ from patterns experienced by Japanese of earlier generations.

The course also deals with the issue of inaccurate, distorted, and sometimes completely unfounded reporting on social issues and patterns in both foreign and domestic news media.

Course Format:

Lectures supplemented by documentary videos. Questions are Welcome at any point.

Preparation and Follow Up:

Before class Read the reference materials for the lecture. Think of the important points and questions you might have. After class Review your notes. At the next lecture ask about any points that are unclear.

Session Topics

- 1 Introduction to the course - themes and issues
- 2 Reading about the allegedly uniquely unique Japanese
- 3 Postwar recovery - Japan during the reign of Douglas MacArthur
- 4 Income doubling and then some - social change on the road to becoming an economic super power
- 5 The 1980s bubble and its bust - one lost decade going on two
- 6 Japan's no longer bulging middle class - inequality and ideology in postwar Japan
- 7 Labor pains - where have all the babies gone?
- 8 Geriatric Japan - the many shades of gray in Japan
- 9 Feminine Japan - three steps behind or stepping out?
- 10 The examination hell frozen over - college entrance in postwar Japan
- 11 Still more labor pains - where have all the good jobs gone?
- 12 Farming Japan - where have all the farmers gone?
- 13 Foreign Japan - immigrant labor and international marriage
- 14 Sick Japan - Social pathologies in postwar Japan
- 15 Different Japan - what makes Japan Japan

Evaluation Method:

Essay examination at the end of the term (100%) based on topics specified by the instructor OR a report on subjects chosen by the student (100%). In either case the written work is prepared outside of class.

There is no in class examination.

Evaluation Criteria

Appropriateness of target to course, thoroughness of research, clarity of presentation. Allowance will be made for students who are not native speakers of English.

Text Book

There is no text book as such. Appropriate readings will be introduced in the lectures and made available through the web site maintained by the instructor.

Reference Reading

Yoshio Sugimoto, **An introduction to Japanese society** (Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Message to Students

Feel free to bring up topics not on the syllabus and to raise questions based on what you have seen or experienced in Japan.

Mail Address

ehkuso@gmail.com

Office Hours

No office at Saitama University and thus no office hours. I will, however, be happy to meet with students during the lunch break.

Course Home Page

- <http://www2.gol.com/users/ehk/saitama/postwar> (365 x 24)
- <http://ehk.servebeer.com/saitama/postwar> (offline 0010-0420)