Japan in Deep Ecological Perspective

The island world of Japan offers a unique standpoint for thinking about ecological history. An ecological standpoint likewise illuminates the deep history of Japan. This course takes in the entire span of Japanese history, from the beginnings of human habitation to the present. Topics include ancient Japanese lifeways; climate and history; the development of agriculture; population and resources; Buddhist and animist views of outer and inner nature; urbanization from ancient capitals to Megacity Tokyo; industrialization and energy; the recent nuclear accident at Fukushima; and future visions. Readings include influential scholarly works and Japanese primary sources in English translation.

This is a small-enrollment writing-intensive seminar that follows a discussion rather than a lecture format. The class meets only once weekly, and attendance is required.

Flags: Writing; Independent Inquiry; Global Cultures.

Prerequisite: Upper-division standing.

Hours: Tuesdays 3:30–6:30, CAL 221

Required texts: Available for purchase at University Coop or from online booksellers.


2. Handouts, electronic-reserve, and on-line readings as specified over the course of the semester (some listed below, some to be announced). Electronic-reserve readings will be available on the course Canvas site.
Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Please complete all of the week’s assigned reading before the weekly meeting and be prepared to discuss and write responses to assigned readings. I will sometimes begin classes with a mini-essay and/or quiz to check your understanding of the assigned reading.

(Res) = Canvas course reserves.

Week 1 (1/17) Introduction
Read: Totman, Preface, Intro., ch. 1 (to p. 21)
Writing workshop: Zen Master Dōgen on “green mountains walking”

Week 2 (1/24) Geosystem and biosystem; forager society after the last Ice Age (to ca. 500 BCE)
Read: Totman, ch. 2 + Appendix 1 (pp. 23–42, 293–294)
QUIZ on Totman thru ch. 2 + Barnes

Week 3 (1/31) From Jōmon to Yayoi; What is agriculture?
Read: Totman, ch. 3 (pp. 43–70)
Weekly presentations (1)

Week 4 (2/7) Early agriculture: the age of the first centralized state (600s–1100s)
Read: Totman, ch. 4 (pp. 71–107)
(Res) Ester BOSERUP on agricultural intensification
(Res) William FARRIS on population
Weekly presentations (2)
TURN IN: Jōmon to Kofun-era timeline (ca. 10,000 BCE to ca. 600 CE)

Week 5 (2/14) Later agriculture: the age of warlord government (1200s–1500s)
Read: Totman, ch. 5 (pp. 109–141)
(Res) Kamo no Chōmei, “Record of a Ten Foot Square Hut” (Hōjōki 方丈記)
(Res) Dōgen, “Mountains and Waters Sutra” (Sansui kyō 山水経)
Weekly presentations (3)
Week 6 (2/21) Later agriculture: centralized military rule; Edo: a preindustrial megacity
(ca. 1600–1710s)
Read: Totman, ch. 6 (pp. 143–170)
Weekly presentations (4)

Submit proposal for first synthetic essay

Week 7 (2/28) The late Edo period: resource limits and commercial intensification (ca.
1710s–1850s)
(Res / online) Ei-Ichiro Ochiai, “Japan in the Edo Period: Global Implications of a
Model of Sustainability,” Japan Focus, February 6, 2007, [5 pp.], available at
http://www.japanfocus.org/-Eiichiro-Ochiai/2346/article.html
Japan’s Earthquake Catfish Reveal about Religious Geography.” Japan Review 24
Weekly presentations (5)

Week 8 (3/7) Wrap-up and synthesis of Part One of the course
First synthetic essay due: Synthesize a minimum of 4 supplemental readings from Weeks 2–
7, focusing on the readings for one week (=one time period). Alternatively, you can
pick a single theme and synthesize a minimum of 4 supplemental readings related to
it from a span of multiple weeks. Also prepare a one-page outline summary (multiple
copies for distribution to the class).

—Spring Break—

Week 9 (3/21) Capitalism and world economy; industrial revolution and imperialism
(1860s–1920s)
Read: Totman, ch. 6 (pp. 171–188), ch. 7 (pp. 189–208)
(Res) Readings on TANAKA Shōzō
Weekly presentations (6)

TURN IN: second timeline (to early 20th C.)

Week 10 (3/28) Second industrial revolution and world war, 1920s–1940s
Read: Totman, ch. 7 (pp. 208–236)
(Res / JSTOR) YASUBA Yasukichi. 1996. “Did Japan Ever Suffer from a Shortage of
Natural Resources Before World War II?” Journal of Economic History, 56:3
(September), 543–560.
Weekly presentations (7)

Week 11 (4/4) Hyper-industrialization and mega-urbanization in the Age of High-Speed
Growth (1950s–1970s); Project team meetings
Read: Totman, ch. 8 (pp. 237–258)

Week 12 (4/11) Hyper-industrialization and mega-urbanization (continued)

(Res) Masanobu FUKUOKA, The One-Straw Revolution

Weekly presentations (8)

Project proposals due (for second synthetic essay, on Fukushima)

Week 13 (4/18) Slowdown; post-growth futures

Read: Totman, ch. 8, Conclusion (pp. 258–282, 283–291)

(Res) Hiroshi KOMIYAMA, Beyond the Limits to Growth

Weekly presentations (9)

[Comments returned on project proposals; panel assignments and presentation schedule distributed.]

Week 14 (4/25) Project work: panel presentations (1)

Week 15 (5/2) Project work: panel presentations (2)

Final project essay due

Course requirements and grading:

Grading is based on:

• Preparation and engagement, including in-class discussion, in-class writing (unannounced), and engagement with other seminar members’ work, worth 20% of the total course grade. Participation in class discussion is evaluated on both quantity and quality (quality means serious, detailed engagement with the texts).

• Two presentations of supplemental readings (worth 10% each).

• Two timelines with written analysis (10% each).

• Synthetic essay based on supplemental readings (project proposal: 5%; essay [partial revision of project proposal] worth 10% of course grade).

• One quiz (5%)

• Project work: project proposal: 5%; essay [partial revision of project proposal]: 10%; presentation: 5%.

Plus/Minus grading will be used. The grading scale is: 100–94% = A; 93–90% = A- ; 89–87% = B+ ; 86–84% = B ; 83–80% = B- ; 79–77% = C+ ; 76–74% = C ; 73–70% = C- ; 69–67% = D+ ; 66–64% = D ; 63–60% = D- ; below 60% = F.

Please note:

• Papers are due at the beginning of the specified class period.

• This is a discussion-intensive (meaning presence-intensive) course. In-class writing and discussion work cannot be made up for non-prearranged absences.

If you anticipate that you will need to miss classes this semester, please drop the course and sign up for it again in a future semester.
Note taking: Detailed note taking is fundamental to understanding the course content. Your own detailed lecture notes are without question your best study guide.

Attendance: I take regular attendance. After the first two recorded absences (non-prearranged), each additional absence will knock two points off of your overall course grade (e.g. from 90/100 to 88/100). Please keep track of your own absences, as I do not add up the attendance totals until the end of the semester.

Etiquette: Please do not come and go during the class period. Please arrive on time. If you are unavoidably late, as a courtesy to the class, please enter quietly so as not to interfere with the concentration of other students.

Please refrain from using computers and electronic devices during class meetings.

Recording: All lectures are proprietary material. Audio or video recording of lectures in any form is not permitted without prior consent of instructor.

Cheating and plagiarism: All work you do for this course will be your own original contributions. Plagiarism is copying anything—words or ideas—without giving credit to the original author. So, give credit. Ask me if you don’t know how. If you copy and paste anything from someone else’s work and use it as part of your own paper, that is plagiarism, even if you change the words. Cases of scholastic dishonesty will be referred to the Dean of Students and are subject to disciplinary penalties that may include failure in the course and dismissal from the university. UT Honor Code: http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html

Email contact: I welcome questions by email and can usually respond to you within two business days. However, I do not accept assignments via email.

Academic accommodations: At the beginning of the semester, students with disabilities who need special accommodations should notify me by presenting a letter prepared by the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (contact them at 512-471-6259 or 471-4641 TTY, http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/).

Religious observances: Please notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. You will be given an opportunity to complete missed work within a reasonable before or after the absence.

Writing Center: Please take advantage of the University Writing Center, PCL 2.330, 471-6222, uwc.utexas.edu). Their mission: The University Writing Center offers free, individualized help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. This service is not just for writing with problems. Getting feedback is a normal part of a successful writing project.
The UWC consultants are trained to work with you on your writing in ways that preserve the integrity of your work and help you become a stronger, more independent writer.

Welcome and がんばってください = Ganbatte kudasai! = Do your best!