This course examines continuity and change in Japanese politics since 1945, including party and electoral politics, political economy, and public policy. It explores how a single party, the Liberal Democratic Party, was able to establish a thorough dominance of the system from 1955-2009 and again since 2012. It also explores how Japan achieved “miracle” growth rates for 30 years but is now facing the challenge of population decline and stagnant growth.

By exploring alternative explanations for the ways in which politics in Japan is distinct from politics in many other advanced industrial democracies, the course will help students learn to draw conclusions through comparison (across time and across countries) and to critically assess competing explanations based on such comparisons. We will pay particular attention to the opportunity to explore the effects of changing institutions on politics by examining Japan’s “experiment” with electoral and administrative reforms in the 1990s, while also exploring how Japan’s decision not to fully incorporate women or immigrants into its workforce is affecting its economy and politics.

The first half of the course is more lecture-oriented and will present the basic contours of postwar Japan’s one-party-dominant and “convoy capitalist” regime, as well as changes in political and economic institutions that have taken place since the 1990s. After the midterm, we will switch to a presentation-and-discussion format as we focus on a series of contemporary issues in Japanese politics.

READINGS:

All required readings are available as pdf files on the Collab site. I encourage you to download them to an e-reader and learn how to highlight and make notes on them with an e-pencil (to save on paper and printing costs). In addition, you should expect to read several books (you may purchase them or check them out from the library) and many articles on the topic of your term paper.

REQUIREMENTS:

This course requires students to take a midterm, deliver an oral presentation, write a research paper, and participate in discussion. The in-class midterm, based on lectures and the readings up to that point and worth 35% of the final grade, is scheduled for October 21. During the second half of the term, we will focus on a series of contemporary issues in
Japanese politics (selected by students well ahead of time, during the first week of classes), starting each class session with an oral presentation by 2-3 students before switching over to discussion mode. **Presentations** of 25-30 minutes (so 10-15 minutes per student), will count for 20% of the final grade. Students will then write a **10-12 page research paper**, worth 30% of the final grade, on an aspect of the topic that they covered for their oral presentations. Note that each student will write his or her OWN paper, although working together to share books and prepare the oral presentation is expected. The papers written by partners will likely overlap in coverage, but it is expected that in most cases each student will narrow the topic in a distinct way and present his/her own unique take on the topic. I provide guidelines on the [paper and presentation assignment from this link](#), and [this bibliography](#) provides you with a jump start finding relevant readings. The remaining 15% of the grade will be based on **participation in class discussion**.

**SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE (8/28)**

**PART I: THE 1955 SYSTEM**

1. **LEGACY OF HISTORY: LATE-DEVELOPMENT, WAR, AND OCCUPATION (9/2)**


2. **POLITICS UNDER THE 1955 SYSTEM: CAMP CONFLICT, FACTIONS, KOENKAI, AND CLIENTELISM (9/4 and 9/9)**


3. **POLITICAL ECONOMY UNDER 1955 SYSTEM: CONVOY CAPITALISM (9/11 and 9/16)**

PART II: THE COLLAPSE OF THE 1955 SYSTEM

4. ELECTORAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS: HOW DID IT HAPPEN AND HOW WAS IT SUPPOSED TO TRANSFORM JAPANESE POLITICS (9/18 and 9/23)


5. ELECTORAL REFORM: DID IT BRING ABOUT TWO-PARTY POLITICS AND REPLACE CLIENTELISM AND FACTIONS WITH ISSUE-BASED PARTY COMPETITION? (9/25, no class on 9/30, and 10/2)


Students Must Visit Prof. Schoppa in pairs in his office by fall break to discuss progress toward student presentations.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM: DID IT PRODUCE STRONGER PM LEADERSHIP? (10/9 and 10/14)


7. POLITICAL ECONOMY SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF THE BUBBLE ECONOMY: HOW HAS JAPAN RESPONDED TO DEFLATION AND STAGNATION? (10/16)


MIDTERM: OCTOBER 21!!!

PART III: TOPICS IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE POLITICS

8. JAPAN’S DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE: AGING AND DEPOPULATION (10/23)


9. DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE: WHY SO FEW IMMIGRANTS? (10/28)


10. THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT AND WOMEN IN POLITICS (10/30)


11. DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE: WOMENOMICS (11/4)


12. ABENOMICS (11/6)

13. ABE’S EMBRACE OF THE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TPP) (11/11)


14. ENERGY POLICY SINCE FUKUSHIMA (11/13)


15. MEDIA AND POLITICS IN JAPAN (11/18)


16. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN JAPAN (11/20)

Leonard Schoppa and Skye Fitzgerald, “The Slow Way Home (documentary film)”—can be viewed online at: https://vimeo.com/136897578, password: Virginia.

17. ABE’S SECURITY POLICY AND POSSIBLE CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION (11/25)


18. THE OKINAWA BASE ISSUE (12/2)


19. WRAP-UP (12/4)

Research Paper Due, December 6

PROF. SCHOPPA’S CLASS RULES

1. MISSED TESTS: You should notify me before the midterm if, for some reason, you will not be able to make it on that date. Permission will only be given in exceptional cases, and make-ups will be scheduled either before or after the regularly scheduled date--at professor’s convenience.

2. LATE PAPERS: The final grade on the paper/project will be docked one letter for every day it is late unless the delay has been approved by me (based on a very good reason) at
least a week before the due date. Last minute computer problems are not an excuse!!! Back-up your work to avoid losing it, and leave time for you to deal with last minute hitches (like a broken printer, a computer virus, a line in the computer lab) by aiming to finish well before the deadline.

3. PLAGIARISM: Using someone else's words or ideas without attribution constitutes an offense of "plagiarism" that is grounds for expulsion under the University's Honor System. If you are using more than four words in a row that are identical to those in another source, you should put them in quotation marks and cite the source of the quotation. If you refer to a fact (e.g. statistical data; historical details) or idea that is not "general knowledge," you should identify the source, including the page number, from which this fact or idea is drawn. I consider something to be "general knowledge" if I could easily find this "fact" in three different published sources. For example, many sources tell us Columbus sailed to the Americas in 1492, so you would not need to cite this date.