

(Arts Basic) History: Re-Inventing Japan

1. Date and Time

Thursday, 1st period (10:30~12:00) beginning 4/16.

2. General Description

The following is a draft syllabus. I reserve the right to make substantive revisions as necessary. You will be informed in advance of any such decision.

This course is a seminar in modern Japanese history, with a focus on (1) understanding the continuities and discontinuities that have contributed to the formation of modern and contemporary Japan through the exploration of discrete issues including race, gender, culture, etc., and (2) improving your critical thinking, reading, and communication skills.

In other words, there are two categories of goals: **content** and **skills**. By the end of the term you will:

1. rethink the contours of modern Japanese history, culture, and nationality; challenge the mythology of a historically monolithic Japan from the perspective of history, and be able to apply that perspective and our shared findings in other historical contexts, and
2. be a more efficient and critical reader of academic English, and an improved communicator.

Whether or not you are involved with Japan in the future, these are skills and knowledge directly applicable to your lives beyond university, both in and out of the workplace.

3. Course Content

Our central textbook is a thematic introduction to modern Japanese history. We will use this as a jumping off point for discussion and other readings.

The course is not a lecture. This means that you cannot slack off, and you will not be able to fake it. You must complete the readings to be involved in the discussions, and must be involved in the discussions to receive a good grade.

Schedule

Wk 1	1. Introduction	Wk 5	5. Race
Wk 2	2. Japan	Wk 6	Race (<i>additional readings</i>)
Wk 3	3. Nature	Wk 7	6. Gender
Wk 4	4. Culture	Wk 8	Gender (<i>additional readings</i>)

Wk 9	7. Civilization	Wk 12	TBA
Wk 10	8. Globalization	Wk 13	Presentations
Wk 11	9. Citizenship	Wk 14	Presentations

Assignments

The work in this course is not limited to reading and discussion. You will need to, at the very least:

1. **Lead discussion** at least once, with at least one partner (depends on enrollment)
 - Discussion leaders will be assigned in advance, and will meet with me for about one hour prior to class (by appointment) to prepare. Specifics will vary according to student enrolment. Guidelines provided separately.
2. Produce a **final project**
 - You may write a traditional seminar research paper (15-25 pages), but I would prefer that you propose a creative project taking advantage of your unique talents and interests. Write an app, make a movie, curate an exhibit online or off, build a model, etc. Group projects are encouraged (but not coauthored papers). Guidelines provided separately.
3. Make a **presentation** of a “draft” version of your final project
 - Present your work to the class at the end of the term. Specifics will vary according to student enrolment. Guidelines provided separately.
4. Write **weekly reading responses** online
 - There will be no tests or exams, but you will be expected to respond in no more than two paragraphs to the readings each Wk.

Class Notes

I will make available any lecture notes after each class. Please feel free to use them to review, explore, and study. They won't replace your own in-class notes, but can hopefully be a useful supplement.

4. Textbook

- Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. 1998. *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*. Japan in the Modern World. New York: ME Sharpe.

Additional readings will be supplied as PDFs, etc.

5. Reference Materials

To supplement your knowledge of Japanese history as needed, I recommend the library's electronic copy of:

- Tsutsui, William M. 2009. *A Companion to Japanese History*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

6. Evaluation

Participation	15%
Reading responses	15%
Discussion leader	15%
Presentation	15%
Project	40%

For reference, be aware that a “good” project gets a B. Amaze me and you get an A, disappoint me and you’re looking at a C at best. Same for the course.

“A” = exceptional. “B” = good. “C” = meh. Anything else = trouble.