Professor Takako Hikotani  
Email: tk84@columbia.edu  
Office hours: Mondays, 1pm-2:30pm in Room 915, IAB, and by appointment

**Overview**: This course examines contemporary Japanese domestic politics and foreign policy. No prior knowledge of Japanese politics is required. However, this is not an introductory course. It is a graduate course (open also to upper level undergraduates) that discusses important issues about Japanese politics and government performance.

The course will be conducted “seminar-style” with students expected to contribute to discussion based on an advance consideration of required readings. Discussion sessions will be arranged after consultation with the students.

**Grades/Expectations**: A take-home midterm examination will be distributed in class on October 31 and due on November 7 (to be submitted via email). A final research paper (12-15 pages for undergraduates, 15-18 pages for graduate students) is due at the start of the last class on December 12. Students will be expected to give a presentation on December 12 based on their papers. Final course grades will be calculated as follows: Take-home midterm exam: 25%, Final Research Paper: 50%, Attendance and classroom contributions: 25%.

**Plan of Class**: This course will introduce you to seven important puzzles about Japanese politics. As we try to solve these puzzles, we will learn about:
1. Important actors in Japanese politics: politicians, parties, bureaucrats, groups, citizens
2. Positions that different actors take (policy preferences), and the sources of these preferences.
3. How political institutions (electoral systems, administrative systems) affect the policy preferences of these actors, and block or enhance the representation of these actors’ interests.

- In **Part 1** (Week 2 to Week 3), students will be introduced to the origins and foundations of Japan’s security and economic policies.
- **Part 2** (Week 4 to Week 8) will focus on the policy making process: electoral system, intra-party organization, party politics, and political-bureaucratic relations. We will discuss how the institutional changes that took place in the past 20 years have changed the policy making process in Japan in important ways.
- **Part 3** (Week 9 to Week 12) we will look at contemporary public policy challenges for Japan. We will discuss how the changes in public policy (or the lack thereof) can be due to the changes in the policy making process, and why.
**About the research paper:** Students are required to choose one specific policy challenge for Japan, and evaluate the policy responses to the challenge. The papers should include (1) who the relevant actors are, (2) what these actors want and why, (3) how the changes in the policy making process has affected (or has not affected) whose preferences would be reflected in policy. Students should discuss with the professor about their topics by the end of October. Based on their topics, they will be assigned to become discussion leaders in one of the classes between Week 9 and Week 12. They are also expected to present their findings on Week 13.

**Week 1 (Sept 12) Introduction**
Overview of class and logistics
Watch Japan’s About Face (PBS)

To read after class:

**PART ONE: Historical Background**

**Week 2 (Sept. 19) Origins of Japanese Security Policy**

**Puzzle 1:** Why has security policy been relatively constant for the past 70 years? (And, is the recent security legislation a radical departure from the past?)

**Required Readings**


Schaller, Michael. 1997. *Altered States: The United States and Japan since the occupation*. New York,

**Recommended Readings**


**Week 3 (Sept. 26) “Miraculous” Economic Growth and its Aftermath**

**Puzzle 2:** Why was Japan able to recover from the ashes of WWII to hosting the Olympics in 1964? How has the miraculous growth affected the political economy of Japan thereafter?

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**

PART TWO: Japan’s Political Process: Actors and Institutions

From Week 4 to Week 8, we focus on the political process. We look at the policy making process in a parliamentary democracy as a “chain of delegation.” There are four discrete steps the “chain”, (1) From voters to elected representatives, (2) From legislators to the executive branch, (3) From the head of government (prime minister) to the heads of different executive departments, and (4) From the heads of different executive departments to civil servants. Each Week we will focus on one of the steps, and explore what the nature of relationship in each step was, and how it has changed (and not changed) in the past twenty years. In Week 8, we sum up our observations and discuss how the current policy making process is likely to affect Japan’s responses to its challenges ahead.

Week 4 (TBA) Voters, Politicians and the Electoral System

Note: October 3 class will be rescheduled after consultation with students. We will watch a documentary, “Senkyo.” For background information on the documentary, see PBS Website: http://www.pbs.org/pov/campaign/campaign_background.php

Puzzle 3: Why did the LDP remain in power for so long? (Are Japanese elections “unique”?)

Required Readings


Recommended Readings

Week 5 (Oct. 10) The Prime Minister and the Party System

Puzzle 4: Why were there such frequent turnover of prime ministers in Japan?

Required Readings


Recommended Readings

Week 6 (Oct. 17) Politicians and Bureaucrats

Puzzle 5: Who was/is more “powerful” in Japanese policy making, politician or bureaucrats?

Required Readings

pp.1-17.


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 7 (Oct. 24) Opposition Failure:**

**Puzzle 6**: Why has the opposition parties failed in becoming a viable alternative to the LDP?

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**

**Week 8 (Oct. 31) The “New” Politics: Promise and Pitfalls**

**Required Readings**


**Suggested Readings**


**PART THREE: Explaining Public Policy Outcomes**

From Week 9 to Week 12, we examine the challenges Japan faces today, and the policy responses that has taken place so far. Tentatively, the following policy topics have been chosen. Depending on the interest of the students, the topics and readings may be changed.

**Week 9 (Nov. 14) Politics and Policy in the Era of Slow Economic Growth**

*(Guest Lecture: Mr. Genichi Osawa, Ministry of Finance, Japan)*

**Required Readings**


Toyama, Kazuhiko. 2015. The Curse of ‘Japan Inc.’ and Japan’s microeconomic competitiveness.

**Recommended Readings**
TBA

**Week 10 (Nov. 21) Demographic Challenges: Gender, Immigration**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**

**Week 11 (Nov. 28) Local Politics**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**

**Week 12 (Dec. 5) Security Challenges**

**Required Readings**


Liff, Adam P. 2015. “Japan’s Defense Policy: Abe the Evolutionary” *Washington Quarterly* 38, no.2


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 13 (Dec. 12) Wrap up: Student Presentations**