

PSCI 3641.001: Politics of Japan
Fall 2026

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Class Time and Location:
T&R, 11:10-12:30 in Wooten 315
Office Hours:
T--10~11am & R--1~2pm

1. Course Description

This is a course on the government and politics in Japan with emphasis on elections and political parties in the post-World War II era. The unique experiences of Japan since the mid-19th century—the rapid modernization since the 1860s, the external aggression that lasted until 1945, the postwar economic “miracle,” decades of one-party rule, and the sudden economic slump in the 1990s—sometimes lead us to think that Japan is a mysterious country that cannot be understood in a comparative perspective. In this class, we will seek to remove the veil of mystery and “make sense of Japan” from a comparative politics framework.

2. Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- explain the historical and social background of the modern political system of Japan.
- explain the basic structure of the LDP-dominant politics in the post-WW2 era.
- explain the changes in the political and economic systems since the 1990s.

3. Required Texts

- Louis D. Hayes. 2018. *Introduction to Japanese Politics*, 6th edition. Routledge. ISBN: 9781138244153
- Frances McCall Rosenbluth & Michael F. Thies. 2010. *Japan Transformed: Political Change and Economic Restructuring*. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 9780691135922
- There will be other reading materials. See below.

4. Requirements & Evaluation

Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	40%
Quizzes	30%

- Exams There will be a midterm exam and a cumulative final exam. Makeup exams will be given only under most extreme and unusual circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor. The exam format will be announced in advance. (Likely, UNT laptop computers will be provided to students, and you will type your answers using the laptop in the classroom.)

• **Quizzes** Starting in Week 3, we will have a quiz every Tuesday at 11:10am (except for the Thanksgiving week). Questions will come from what you learned in the previous week and the assigned readings for the current week. Students will be allowed to bring in a **one-page memo** (letter-size paper, one-side only) and consult it during a quiz. The memo may be hand-written or typed, but **it may not include scanned or photographed images** of the assigned readings. Each student's three lowest quizzes will be dropped. There will be no makeup or rescheduled quizzes.

Note:

- If you are a student athlete who will have to miss a quiz due to travel or etc, please contact me at the beginning of the semester (by the end of the 2nd week).
- If you need to miss a quiz due to a religious observance, please contact me at the beginning of the semester (by the end of the 2nd week).
- If you miss a quiz due to a family emergency, the Dean of Students Office has a standard procedure. Please follow it.
<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students/about-us/faq.html>
- If you miss a quiz due to illness, transportation problems, etc, that will be one of the three to be dropped. But if you have a jury duty on a quiz day, contact me with documentation.
- The Dean of Students Office has a procedure for students who must be absent for more than 5 consecutive school days due to extenuating circumstances. If you miss quizzes in such a situation, you may be asked to follow their procedure.

• **Extra credits** No additional extra credit assignments will be offered to individual students. Please don't even ask.

Grading Scale (tentative, but grade cutoffs will not be raised)

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 0-59%

* Note that 89.5 will be rounded up to 90, but 89.4999 is still a B, and the same rounding rule applies to other letter grades (79.4999, etc).

5. Rules and Advice

- This course is primarily lecture based, and the lectures will not closely follow the texts. Hence it is very important that you attend class regularly and take good notes in order to succeed in this course.
- The instructor's lecture notes are not available to students. It is students' responsibility to obtain class notes from a classmate for missed classes.
- Disruptive behavior is not tolerated. Cell phones must be silenced during the class.
- The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus. Any changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

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A. UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Accommodation Statement

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Survivor Advocacy

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change

where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940)565 2759.

B. Academic Support & Student Services

1. Student Support Services

a) Mental Health

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)
- [Individual Counseling](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling>)

b) Chosen Names

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT.

- [UNT Records](#)
- [UNT ID Card](#)
- [UNT Email Address](#)
- [Legal Name](#)

**UNT eulDs cannot be changed at this time. The collaborating offices are working on a process to make this option accessible to UNT community members.*

c) Pronouns

Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in-person. Just as we ask and don't assume someone's name, we should also ask and not assume someone's pronouns.

You can [add your pronouns to your Canvas account](#) so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

Below is a list of additional resources regarding pronouns and their usage:

- [What are pronouns and why are they important?](#)
- [How do I use pronouns?](#)
- [How do I share my pronouns?](#)
- [How do I ask for another person's pronouns?](#)
- [How do I correct myself or others when the wrong pronoun is used?](#)

d) Additional Student Support Services

- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- [Multicultural Center](https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center) (<https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [Pride Alliance](https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance) (<https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance>)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>)

2. Academic Support Services

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (<https://library.unt.edu/>)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)

Course Policy on Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, Cheating, and Generative AI/Chatbots

This policy pertains to *all* assignments in this course that require writing. That includes – but is not limited to – papers and examinations. All written work you submit in this course must be your own, original work.

What does that mean?

- You give appropriate credit to each and every source, and do so each and every time you use that source, irrespective of whether you paraphrase or quote that source. Failure to give appropriate credit means you present the work as your own.
- You do not use any material written by someone else or by generative AI – including, but not limited to chatbots such as ChatGPT – and present it as your own work.

Why?

- According to the UNT Academic Integrity Policy ([UNT Policy 6.003](#)), any form of “unauthorized assistance” constitutes cheating. As a result, use of any artificial intelligence is not authorized for completion of assignments or exams in this course, unless specifically authorized by the instructor.
- Academic integrity is defined in [UNT Policy 6.003](#) and indicates that the following constitute violations of academic honesty: a student has another person/entity do the work of any substantive portion of a graded assignment for them, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, and/or using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT).
- For additional information, consult [UNT Policy 6.003](#).

What are the consequences?

- Violations will not be tolerated. Any suspected case of academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with current University policy and procedures, as described at <https://vpaa.unt.edu/ss/integrity>.
 - If this is your first academic integrity violation, you can expect a failing grade on the assignment, and you will be reported to the university’s Academic Integrity office.
 - Repeat violations will lead to stronger sanctions up to and including expulsion from UNT.
- These penalties will apply even if you did not knowingly intend to plagiarize or cheat. You must familiarize yourself with the rules of academic integrity and do your own original work – whether at UNT or later in your career – and ignorance is no excuse.

6. Lecture Topics & Readings

“R&T” stands for Rosenbluth & Thies (2010).
Short readings may be added occasionally.

Week 1: Aug 18&20

Tuesday- Logistics/rules & some introduction—different approaches to study Japan
Thursday- Some basic information about the country & the royal succession controversy. Read the CNN article posted on Canvas

Week 2: Aug 25&27

History to the 1870s
Read: Hayes ch1, stopping before the “Modernization” section on p.15

Week 3: Sept 1&3

Tuesday- Politics & diplomacy of the Meiji Regime
Read: Hayes ch1, from the “Modernization” section on p.15 till the end
Ch.2 of Akira Iriye (1997) *Japan and the Wider World: From the Mid-nineteenth Century to the Present*. Routledge. (**Note:** No need to pay attention to historical details like who argued what and what group was on which side. Try to get the big picture.)
No class on Sept 3 – Watch a video to be posted on Canvas

Week 4: Sept 8&10

The decision to begin an unwinnable war
Read: Ch3 of Harukata Takenaka (2014) *Failed Democratization in Prewar Japan: Breakdown of a Hybrid Regime*. Stanford University Press.
Sumio Hatano & Sadao Asada (1989) “The Japanese Decision to Move South (1939-1941)” in Robert Boyce and Edmund Robertson (eds), *Paths to War: New Essays on the Origins of the Second World War*. New York: St. Martin's Press. (**Note:** You don't need to know all the names and exact events described in this article. Pay attention to (1) How Japan's policymaking was influenced by the changing situations in Europe and (2) The extent to which Japan's policymaking was done in an internally coherent manner.)

Week 5: Sept 15&17

The early post-war years
Read: Hayes ch2
R&T ch3, from the “Occupation of Japan” section on p.42 till the end
(**Note:** The structure of the government stipulated in the 1947 constitution will be covered in the following week, so you don't need to pay much attention to it at this point.)

Week 6: Sept 22&24

Tuesday--The structure of government
Read: Hayes ch3
Thursday--**Midterm Exam**

Week 7: Sept 29 & Oct 1

The 1955 System, Part I

Read: R&T ch4, stopping before the “Opposition Parties” section on p.59. (**Note:** It’s just a little over 6 pages, but this part contains so many important things! This will be the foundation upon which many of the things you will learn later will be based.)

Ch.2 of Krauss & Pekkanen. *The Rise and Fall of Japan’s LDP*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2011. (**Note:** Just read Section 1.3 that begins on p.588.)

Week 8: Oct 6&8

The 1955 System, Part II

Read: R&T ch4, from the “Opposition Parties” section on p.59 till the end.

Reed & Bolland (1999) “The fragmentation effect of SNTV in Japan.” in B. Grofman, S. Lee, E. A. Winckler, & B. Woodall (Eds.), *Elections in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan under the single non-transferable vote: The comparative study of an embedded institution* (pp. 211-226). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. (**Note:** Just read the part on opposition parties (to the middle of p.218). No need to read the rest of the chapter)

Week 9: Oct 13&15

Postwar Political Economy

Read: R&T ch5, stopping before the “Globalization and...” section on p.89. (**Note:** the details about employment protection, pensions, and health insurance on pp.85-88 can be just skimmed.)

Hayes ch9, stopping before the “Meeting the Challenge” section on p.149. (**Note:** you can just skim this.)

Week 10: Oct 20&22

The LDP system strained & the political reform in the 1990s

Read: R&T ch5, from the “Globalization and...” section on p.89 till the end.

Hayes ch9, from the “Meeting the Challenge” section on p.149 till the end.

R&T ch6, stopping before the “Party System” section on p.101.

Week 11: Oct 27&29

Political & economic consequences of the reform

Read: R&T ch6, from the “Party System” section on p.101 till the end

R&T ch7 (**Note:** the part between the “Farmers” subsection (p.135) and the “Administrative Decentralization” section (p.148) contains lots of details that are not as important. Feel free to skip those pages.)

Week 12: Nov 3&5

The two-party era & the DPJ government

Read: McElwain (2012) “The Nationalization of Japanese Elections.” *JEAS*.

Hrebenar & Haraguchi (2014) “The fall of the DPJ and return of the LDP to power.” in Hrebenar & Nakamura (eds.) *Party Politics in Japan: Political Chaos and Stalemate in the 21st Century*. Routledge.

Week 13: Nov 10&12

The LDP's renewed dominance after 2012

Read: Maeda (2023) "Wedge Issue Politics in Japan: Why Not Revising the Constitution is Helping the Pro-Revision Ruling Party." *JEAS*.

Newspaper articles to be posted on Canvas

Week 14: Nov 17&19

Foreign relations & defense

Read: Hayes ch12 & 13 (**Note:** No need to pay attention to factual and historical details. Try to get the big picture.)

Week 15: No class on Nov 24&26 (Thanksgiving break)

Week 16: Dec 1&3

Tuesday -- Education

Read: Hayes ch10, stopping before the "Health Care" section on p.171

Thursday -- **Final Exam**

Timeline

1603-1867 The Tokugawa Shogunate

1853 Commodore Matthew Perry's visit

1868 The Meiji Restoration

1889 The Meiji Constitution was promulgated (in effect 1890-1947)

1890 The first parliament convened

1894-95 The First Sino-Japanese War

1895 Taiwan was ceded from China to Japan

1904-05 The Russo-Japanese War

1910 Annexation of Korea

1925 Universal male suffrage

1931 The Manchurian Incident

1930s Ultra-nationalists and the military increased influence

1937-45 The Second Sino-Japanese War

1941-45 The Pacific War (The Attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941)

1945 Atomic bombs on Hiroshima & Nagasaki; Surrender; Occupation began

1947 The new (current) constitution came into force

1952 Independence regained; The U.S. forces remained

1955 The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was formed; "The 1955 System" began

1956 Joined the United Nations

1972 Normal diplomatic relationship with China was restored

1972 Okinawa was returned

1990s Economic trouble--"The Lost Decade"

1993 LDP lost power for the first time (returned to power in 1994)

2009 DPJ's landslide electoral victory

2012 LDP returned to power; Shinzo Abe's 2nd time in office started

2026 LDP won the largest-ever majority

Prime Ministers under the current constitution

1. Tetsu Katayama	(1947-1948; 282 days)	Japan Socialist Party
2. Hitoshi Ashida	(1948-1948; 220 days)	Democratic Party
3. Shigeru Yoshida	(1948-1954; 2251 days)	Liberal Party
4. Ichiro Hatoyama	(1954-1956; 745 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
5. Tanzan Ishibashi	(1956-1957; 65 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
6. Nobusuke Kishi	(1957-1960; 1241 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
7. Hayato Ikeda	(1960-1964; 1575 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
8. Eisaku Sato	(1964-1972; 2798 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
9. Kakuei Tanaka	(1972-1974; 886 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
10. Takeo Miki	(1974-1976; 747 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
11. Takeo Fukuda	(1976-1978; 714 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
12. Masayoshi Ohira	(1978-1980; 554 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
13. Zenko Suzuki	(1980-1982; 864 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
14. Yasuhiro Nakasone	(1982-1987; 1806 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
15. Noboru Takeshita	(1987-1989; 576 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
16. Sosuke Uno	(1989-1989; 69 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
17. Toshiki Kaifu	(1989-1991; 818 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
18. Kiichi Miyazawa	(1991-1993; 644 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
19. Morihiro Hosokawa	(1993-1994; 263 days)	Japan New Party
20. Tsutomu Hata	(1994-1994; 64 days)	Japan Renewal Party
21. Tomiichi Murayama	(1994-1996; 561 days)	Japan Socialist Party
22. Ryutaro Hashimoto	(1996-1998; 932 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
23. Keizo Obuchi	(1998-2000; 616 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
24. Yoshiro Mori	(2000-2001; 387 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
25. Junichiro Koizumi	(2001-2006; 1980 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
26. Shinzo Abe	(2006-2007; 366 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
27. Yasuo Fukuda	(2007-2008; 365 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
28. Taro Aso	(2008-2009; 358 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
29. Yukio Hatoyama	(2009-2010; 266 days)	Democratic Party of Japan
30. Naoto Kan	(2010-2011; 452 days)	Democratic Party of Japan
31. Yoshihiko Noda	(2011-2012; 482 days)	Democratic Party of Japan
32. Shinzo Abe	(2012-2020; 2824 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
33. Yoshihide Suga	(2020-2021; 384 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
34. Fumio Kishida	(2021-2024; 1094 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
35. Shigeru Ishiba	(2024-2025; 386 days)	Liberal Democratic Party
36. Sanae Takaichi	(2025-present)	Liberal Democratic Party

#6 Kishi and #8 Sato are brothers.

#6 Kishi and #26&32 Abe are grandfather and grandson.

#11 Fukuda and #27 Fukuda are father and son.

#3 Yoshida and #28 Aso are grandfather and grandson.

#4 Hatoyama and #29 Hatoyama are grandfather and grandson.