

# Contemporary Japanese Society

Sophia University, Summer Session Online 2021(June 14-July1)  
Period 6 (19:10-20:50 Japanese Standard Time)

**Prof. Dr. Ronald Saladin**

## **Course overview/description:**

This course examines the development and current state of contemporary Japanese society. The scope of topics discussed will span from conceptions of Japanese uniqueness via gender constructions, the political system, class and stratification, to family, youth, minorities, work, and demographic challenges. The course will be conducted via video-lectures that can be watched online at the student's convenience. There will be two synchronous online Q&A sessions (one on the day before each exam) in order to ask questions and clarify problems. The grade will be decided based on two written online exams.

## **Course objectives:**

The idea of this course is to create an overview of various aspects that shape the current state of Japanese society. It will enable the participants to create their own comprehensive idea about contemporary Japan.

## **Expected work outside of class:**

Students are required to prepare the reading assignments for each class. Course meetings will comprise of video-lectures uploaded by the professor. Students will also be given tasks such as writing a comment or contributing to online discussion as part of the class-participation.

## **Evaluation:**

**Intermediate Exam 50%**

**Final Exam 50%**

These exams should be understood as a means to reflect and recapitulate the topics attended to during the class. They will be conducted online during class hours and students are allowed to use their study material during the exams. It is, however, recommended to prepare for the exams since there might not be enough time to look up the answers to each question.

## **Textbook:**

Texts will be made available online.

## **I. Introduction**

## **II. Interpreting Japanese Society – Japanese and Western approaches**

Reading:

- Kosaku Yoshino: “The nihonjinron – Thinking Elites’ Ideas of Japanese Uniqueness”. In: *Cultural nationalism in contemporary Japan - A sociological enquiry*. Routledge, 1992, pp. 9 -38.

## **III. Shaping core values – Gender I**

Reading:

- Koyama Shizuko: “Domestic Roles and the Incorporation of Women into the Nation-State”. In: Andrea Germer (et.al.) (eds.): *Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan*. Routledge, 2014, pp. 85-100.
- Cook, Theodore F. Jr.: “Making ‘Soldiers’: The Imperial Army and the Japanese Man in Meiji Society and State”. In: Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (eds.): *Gendering Modern Japanese History*. Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 259-294.

## **IV. Class and stratification – The myth of a middle-class society... and now?**

Reading:

- Sugimoto Yoshio: “Class and Stratification – An Overview”. In: *An Introduction to Japanese Society*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 37-60.

## **V. Marriage and family**

Reading:

- Ölschleger, Hans Dieter: “Family”. In: Josef Kreiner, Ulrich Möhwald, and Hans Dieter Ölschleger (eds.): *Modern Japanese Society*. Brill, 2004, pp. 351-386.

## **VI. Q&A Session (real-time-online-meeting)**

## **VII. INTERMEDIATE EXAM (real-time-online-meeting)**

## **VIII. Constitution and political system**

Reading:

- T.b.a.

## **IX. Youth and education**

Reading:

- Toyama-Bialke, Chisaki: “Adolescence”. In: Josef Kreiner, Ulrich Möhwald, and Hans Dieter Ölschleger (eds.): *Modern Japanese Society*. Brill, 2004, pp. 63-82.

## **X. Work life**

Reading:

- Sugimoto Yoshio: “Varieties in Work and Labor”. In: *An Introduction to Japanese Society*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 86-113.

## **XI. Demographic change**

Reading:

- Atoh, Makoto: “Japan’s Population Growth During the Past 100 Years”. In: Florian Coulmas (et al. eds.): *The Demographic Challenge – A Handbook About Japan*. Brill, 2008, pp. 5-24.
- Ölschleger, Hans Dieter: “Fertility and Mortality”. In: Florian Coulmas (et al. eds.): *The Demographic Challenge – A Handbook About Japan*. Brill, 2008, pp. 25-40.

## **XII. Minorities**

Reading:

- Sugimoto Yoshio: “‘Japaneseness’, Ethnicity, and Minority Groups”. In: *An Introduction to Japanese Society*. Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 189-218

**XIII. Q&A Session (real-time-online-meeting)**

**XIV. FINAL EXAM (real-time-online-meeting)**