1. Course Description
This course examines the historical issues and processes in the political, economic, social, and cultural formation of Japan, from ancient times to the immediate post-World War II period. The history of Japan will be studied from two perspectives: the domestic dynamics and transformations, and Japan’s relations with the external world. The main questions that will be addressed are: what are the major transformations in Japanese history? What factors explain change and continuity? How did Japan interact with the world in the course of its history? What are the characteristics of Japan’s cultural and social development? The course will examine the formation of Japanese political institutions, the evolution of the religious and ideological thought, the role of agriculture in the development of Japan’s society, Japan’s foreign relations, and the development of Japanese art, literature, and traditions. A previous knowledge of Japanese history and culture is not required.

2. Assignments
Students are expected to read the assigned material before class. Each student will choose one article from the Reading Material list below and make a short presentation. The student in charge of making the presentation is required to prepare a short summary (one or two pages) of the article and formulate two questions which will then be discussed in class. The summary should be sent to the lecturer via e-mail before class.

3. Short Essay
At the end of the course, students are required to submit an essay (2,000 words) on any of the issues related to Japan’s history and culture discussed during the course. The essay should be sent to the lecturer via e-mail (pressello@sophia.ac.jp).

4. Grading method:
   Attendance: 30%
   Participation: 30%
   Final essay: 40%

5. Course Plan
Week 1: Introduction. Emergence of the Japanese civilization
Week 2: Formation of the early Japanese state
Week 3: Chinese influence and the establishment of a centralized state
Week 4: The Heian period and the development of a native culture
Week 5: The Kamakura bakufu and culture in feudal Japan
Week 6: Muromachi period: Cultural blossoming amid political confusion
Week 7: Encounter with the Europeans, emergence of castle-towns, and the unification of Japan
Week 8: The Edo period: political stability and economic transformations
Week 9: Society and culture in Edo Japan
Week 10: Wrap-up and class discussion
Week 11: End of the bakufu and restoration of the imperial authority
Week 12: Building a modern Japan and the study of the West in the Meiji period
Week 13: Economic modernization and social impact
Week 14: Political movements, thought, and institutions in Meiji Japan
Week 15: Building Japan’s international status and blossoming of modern literature
Week 16: Japan’s domestic and international consolidation during the Taisho era and society in the 1920s
Week 17: Japan’s society in the 1930s and the road to militarism
Week 18: Japan at war
Week 19: Social and political impact of defeat and the building of postwar Japan
Week 20: Wrap-up and class discussion

6. Reading Materials

Week 3: Chinese influence and the establishment of a centralized state

Week 4: The Heian period and the development of a native culture

Week 5: The Kamakura bakufu and culture in feudal Japan

Week 6: Muromachi period: Cultural blossoming amid political confusion

Week 7: Encounter with the Europeans, emergence of castle-towns, and the unification of Japan

Week 8: The Edo period: political stability and economic transformations


Week 9: Society and culture in Edo Japan


Week 10: Wrap up and class discussion

Week 11: End of the bakufu and restoration of the imperial authority


Week 12: Building a modern Japan and the study of the West in the Meiji period


Week 13: Economic modernization and social impact


Reference:


- “Kido Takayoshi’s Observations of Education in the United States”
- “Kido on the Need for Constitutional Government”
- “Kume Kunitake’s Assessment of European Wealth and Power”
- “Kido’s observations on Returning from the West”

Week 14: Political movements, thought, and institutions in Meiji Japan


Week 15: Building Japan’s international status and the blossoming of modern literature

Week 16: Japan’s domestic and international consolidation during the Taisho era and society in the 1920s

Week 17: Japan’s society in the 1930s and the road to militarism

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