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A Social History of Post-war Japan

Description

More than a half-century has elapsed since the end of the Pacific War. For most university students, this war is part of a distant past and references to prewar and postwar carry no special significance. In contrast, for those old enough to have experienced the Pacific War or its immediate aftermath, the terms prewar and postwar are very evocative and are part of the historical consciousness of many Japanese. This course attempts to answer three basic questions: 1) why is a distinction made between prewar and postwar Japan; 2) how was Japan changed by the Pacific War; 2) what has changed in the fifty-plus years the end of the war. To give students additional perspective on the Japanese experience, the course will make explicit comparisons with Germany and the United Kingdom.

Format

Lectures supplemented by slides and other visual materials. The presentation is topical rather than chronological.

Grading and Required Work

Students will be expected to write one short paper on some aspect of post-war Japanese society, economics, or politics, focusing on either change in the post-war period, or making explicit comparison with the pre-war period. There will be a final examination for the course based on the lectures.

Text

Andrew Gordon, ed., *Postwar Japan as History* (University of California Press, 1993).

Readings

Readings for specific lecture topics will be drawn from the attached bibliography.

Lectures

Session	Topic
1	Introduction to the course - the perils of periodizing history - pre-war, post-war, and other schemes
2	The big picture - major events and trends in Japan since the end of the Pacific War

- 3 Cultural values and economic performance - explaining Japanese growth and British stagnation
- 4 Different trajectories to the welfare state - Japan, Germany, and the UK
- 5 Weak or strong? The early post-war labor movement in comparative perspective
- 6 Does the 1940 system live on? The bureaucratic regime and its Japanese critics
- 7 Consumption and saving - contrasting trajectories in Japan, Britain, and Germany
- 8 Change and continuity in Japanese education - the generalization of the "examination hell"
- 9 Planning and sterility, chaos and excitement - urbanization and urban planning in Japan and Britain
- 10 The greening of Japan - environmentalism without environmental politics
- 11 Minorities in homogeneous nations - welcome and unwelcome guests in Japan, Britain, and Germany
- 12 Really three steps behind? Women in Japan, Britain, and Germany
- 13 Land to the cultivator? Agriculture in Japan, Britain, and Germany
- 14 Analysis or avoidance? Japanese intellectuals and the question of war responsibility
- 15 The corruption of politics and the politics of corruption

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