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A Social and Economic History of Science and Technology in Modern and Early Modern Japan

Description

This course examines the social and economic impact of science and technology in Japan from the mid-eighteenth century until the so-called high growth era of the 1950s and 1960s. The main goals of the course are: 1) to document the scientific and technological level of Japan, particularly in the period before its opening to foreign contact; 2) to document the impact of science and technology on the life of the Japanese people; 3) to demonstrate the importance of science and technology as an element of Japanese history.

Format

Lectures supplemented by slides and other visual materials.

Grading and Required Work

Students will be expected to write one short paper on some aspect of Japanese science and technology in comparison with another country at a comparable point in time. There will be a final examination for the course based on the lectures.

Text

Readings

Lecture Topics

- u The scientific and technological level in Japan at the beginning of the Tokugawa Era
- u Civil engineering in the Tokugawa - the samurai as engineers
- u Medicine and medical knowledge in the Tokugawa era
- u The Tokugawa era farmer - exploited peasant or technologically sophisticated entrepreneur?
- u Honoured foreign teachers and the diffusion of European science and technology in the Meiji era
- u Railroads as agents of social, economic, and technological change
- u Silk: new technology in an ancient industry
- u The power of falling water: the social and economic impact of electrification

- u Little known Japanese inventors whose creations are part of contemporary life
- u Manchuria as a laboratory for the Japanese empire
- u Science and technology in service to militarism
- u Bombed out or beefed up - the state of Japanese science and technology at the end of the Pacific War
- u Science and technological policy under the American Occupation - the Cold War and its contribution to Japanese development

Selected Bibliography

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