

621: Modern Japanese History

【 PROJECT 】

If you choose to do a project, you must / it must be:

1. On **modern Japanese history**
2. A “**digital humanities**” project (presenting data in a nontraditional format, using new technologies beyond just the written word)
3. A **group** project (2-4 people, your choice)

You must submit a proposal by email within one month of the end of classes (5/23, so 6/23). The proposal must include a specific question that you hope to answer, as well as the methodology (and technology) that you will use to do so.

If you choose the paper...

【 PAPER 】

The paper is a 5-10-page analytical paper (5 should be enough). Select one of the following topics, and use the readings and lectures to answer one of the following questions.

Note that links are either to the materials or to the NU library catalog entry, and that I have only provided links for required materials.

Japan and Asia in Meiji*Required*

Compare and contrast Fukuzawa Yukichi’s idea of “*datsu-A*” in [“Datsu-A ron \[On De-Asianization\]”](#) (1885) and Okakura Kakuzō’s idea of “*soku-A*” [identification with Asia] in [The Ideals of the East](#) (1903) and [The Awakening of Japan](#) (1904). What do they tell you about the Japanese intellectual attitudes toward Asia and Japan’s place in the world in the Meiji period?

Optional

For examining Fukuzawa’s idea of “*datsu-A*,” which is a culmination of his earlier beliefs, also read Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Encouragement of Learning* (tr. 1969), Carmen Blacker, *The*

Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi (1964), and/or [The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa](#) (tr. 1960).

New Perspectives on Modernity?

Required

Read chapters 1-2, and conclusion of Daniel Botsman's [Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan](#) and Susan Burns' "Contemplating Places: The Hospital as Modern Experience in Meiji Japan" (in Helen Hardacre and Adam Kern (eds.), [New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan](#)). How do these authors attempt to explain Japan's modernity? In what sense might their approach be a departure from more "traditional" understandings of the rise of modern Japan?

Ideology in Meiji

Required

"Meiji ideology" has been among the most controversial topics in the historiography of modern Japan. Compare its treatment in Basil Hall Chamberlain's [The Invention of a New Religion](#) (1912) with Carol Gluck's [Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period](#) (1985). How do their interpretations differ? On what kinds of sources are their arguments based? How does historical proximity vs. distance condition the approaches of each author?

Optional

Additionally examine Tak Fujitani's [Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan](#) (1998) with the same criteria.

(Men's) Attitudes toward Women in Meiji

Required

Read Eiichi Kiyooka ed., [Fukuzawa Yukichi on Japanese Women: Selected Works](#). What does this book tell you about the state of women as seen by a Japanese male intellectual of the early Meiji period? In Fukuzawa's views, what are the social structures and ideas that restrict women's positions in society, and what are his proposed solutions? What biases influence Fukuzawa's perspectives and proposals?

Women in Rural Japan

Required

Contrast the depiction of rural women found in relevant chapters of Mikiso Hane's [Peasants, Rebels, Women, and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan](#) (2003) to that presented by Robert Smith in his article "[Japanese Village Women](#)," in *Journal of Japanese Studies* (Vol. 7, No. 2). What might account for their very different portrayals?

Optional

Additionally compare the original version of Hane's book, *Peasants, Rebels and Outcasts* (1982).

Women in Postwar Japan**Required**

Read Beate Sirota Gordon's memoirs [The Only Women in the Room](#) (1997) in conjunction with the chapters 12 and 13 of John Dower's [Embracing Defeat](#) (1999) along with the [1947 Constitution](#). Consider what Sirota Gordon's account tells you about the motivations that guided the American drafters of Japan's postwar constitution. Does the claim that it was based on the will of the Japanese people derive from a conscious cynicism on the part of Occupation authorities? How would you assess the role of Sirota Gordon? Focus your discussion on the constitutional guarantee of civil and/or human rights, and women's rights in particular.

Optional

Additionally compare Susan Pharr's article "The Politics of Women's Rights" in Robert E. Ward, ed. *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation* (1987).

You may also choose to compare the stipulations of the postwar Constitution in this regard to its Japanese predecessor and to the constitutional realities in contemporary United States.

Manchuria**Required**

[Life along the South Manchurian Railway: The Memoirs of Ito Takeo](#), translated by Joshua Fogel (1988; *ILL only!*) is a valuable English-language account of Japan's colonial project in Manchuria (Northeast China). What is the relationship between Japanese intellectuals and Japan's modern empire? How did Japan's quest for an empire in Asia shaped the actions and lives of Japanese intellectuals? You may choose to examine this source along with the

required readings on Manchuria for this course and/or James Crowley, "Intellectuals as Visionaries of the New Asian Order," in James Morley ed., [Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan](#) (1971).

Optional

Additionally compare Kazoku Kuramoto's memoir, [Manchurian Legacy](#) (1999, EPUB format!). What does Kuramoto's account add to the other sources. On the other hand, what does Kuramoto's narrative conceal, neglect, or forget?

* Kuramoto's book can also be used for "Japan at War" below...

Prewar Democracy

Required

Read and evaluate the [Autobiography of Ozaki Yukio](#) (tr. 2001) as a lens through which to examine the political culture of Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa Japan. When, how, and why did Japanese parliamentarism emerge and gain influence? What does the account tell us about the nature of Japanese "democracy" in prewar Japan?

Rise of Militarism

Required

Identify one or two issues inherent in the rise of militarism, and compare and contrast their treatment in two of the following: Ben-Ami Shillony, [Revolt in Japan](#) (1972); James Crowley, [Japan's Quest for Autonomy](#) (1966); and Gordon Berger, [Parties out of Power in Japan, 1931-1941](#) (1977). How do their interpretations differ? On what kinds of sources are their arguments based? How does historical proximity vs. distance condition the approaches of each author?

Optional

Additionally compare Eri Hotta's recent account, [1941](#) (2013).

Japan at War

Required

Read John Dower's [War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War](#) (1986, EPUB format!) and Theodore and Haruko Cook's [Japan at War: An Oral History](#) (1993). How do the two accounts inform our understanding of Japan's wartime leadership and popular acquiescence?

adapted from [here](#).