

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall 1986

History 455

JAPAN'S MODERN CENTURY, 1853-1952:
THE RISE & FALL OF THE IMPERIAL STATE

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Office Hours: Mondays, 2-4 p.m. or by appt.

Course Description. History 455 deals with the extraordinary century during which Japan developed from an isolated feudal society into a global power--ending in war, defeat, and a new start after World War Two. The course will cover the following broad topics:

- I. The Feudal Background
- II. The Restoration & the Meiji State
- III. Industrialization & Imperialism
- IV. Taisho 'Democracy' & the Interwar Crisis
- V. The Warfare State
- VI. Occupied Japan

Initial readings and the first weeks of lectures introduce the feudal legacy to modern Japan from various perspectives. Among other topics, we will examine the questions of the uniqueness of this feudal stage for an Asian nation and the degree to which the values and socio-economic patterns of the feudal period contributed to Japan's ability to transform itself rapidly into a modern nation-state.

The "modern" period in Japanese history can be conveniently dated from 1853, when Commodore Perry of the United States forced Japan's feudal leaders to open their country to foreign contacts. The decade and a half that followed was tumultuous and ended with the overthrow of the Shogunate and the establishment of a new government under the Emperor Meiji. By the end of the Meiji period (1868-1912), Japan had made rapid progress in catching up with the Western powers -- at considerable cost to its own people and to other Asians. The political and economic developments of this period (including the establishment of a parliamentary form of government, two major wars against China and Russia, and the

beginnings of a capitalist economy), as well as their social consequences, will be covered in the weeks up to roughly the middle of the semester.

The second half of the course examines Japan's progress from triumph to tragedy. Rather than a strict chronological approach, here a thematic division of the material will be undertaken with special attention devoted to the emergence of a "dual economy" dominated by giant oligopolies (zaibatsu), class tensions and ideological conflicts, and the flowering of a bourgeois culture. Japan's "road to war" is viewed from both the international and the domestic perspectives. It is analyzed, in part, as an imperialist struggle and a response to the Depression and the crisis of the global economic order. Attention will be given to the "socialization for death" to which the Japanese were subjected as the international crisis mounted.

The final lectures in the course will deal with the Allied Occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952, which was dominated by the United States. During this period, early reformist ideals of "demilitarization and democratization" were gradually superceded by the objective of rehabilitating Japan as an anti-communist ally in the cold war. The course will thus conclude in 1952, looking both back at the legacies of Japan's "modern century" and forward to the legacies of the Occupation to present-day Japan.

Required Texts. There are six assigned books, all in paperback. In addition, there is a reader of approximately 200 pages, to be purchased from Bob's Copy Shop at University Square.

Edwin O. Reischauer. JAPAN: THE STORY OF A NATION.

John Dower, ed. ORIGINS OF THE MODERN JAPANESE STATE:
SELECTED WRITINGS OF E. H. NORMAN.

Junichiro Tanizaki. SOME PREFER NETTLES.

Mikiso Hane. PEASANTS, REBELS & OUTCASTES: THE UNDERSIDE OF
MODERN JAPAN

Saburo Ienaga. THE PACIFIC WAR, 1931-1945: A CRITICAL
PERSPECTIVE ON JAPAN'S ROLE IN WORLD WAR II.

Shohei Ooka. FIRES ON THE PLAIN.

Course Requirements. There will be two examinations, the midterm on October 21 and the final on December 19. In addition, an interpretative essay of approximately 10 pages in length will be required by November 20, based on certain issues which arise from the readings assigned in the course.

Grading. Midterm exam, 22.5%; paper, 32.5%; final exam, 45%.