

Sophia University –Summer Session 2026

July 1 – July 22, 2026 *July 1: Orientation. *July 3: No class day

Date: January 2026

Course Title	Contemporary Japanese Society
Course Code	SOZ480
Instructor	Ronald Saladin
Class Period	3rd Period (13:30–15:10)
Course Format	In-Person
Language of Instruction	English
Maximum class size	50
Course Description	This course examines the development and current state of contemporary Japanese society. The scope of topics discussed will span from conceptions of Japanese uniqueness via gender constructions, the political system, class and stratification, to family, youth, minorities, work and demographic challenges. It will also be attended by the media, popular culture as well as leisure time and consumption.
Course Objectives	The idea of this course is to create an overview of various aspects that shape the current state of Japanese society. It will enable the participants to create their own comprehensive idea about contemporary Japan.
Expected work outside of class	Students are required to prepare reading assignments and do additional tasks (homework) for each class. This could take between 2-3 hours, depending on the individual.
Course Materials	
	Purchase of textbook: not necessary
	e-book: not acceptable
Moodle	Texts will be made available via Moodle.
Contact Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • via Email <p>*The email address will be available at CGED office or informed by the instructor in the first class if needed.</p>
Evaluation (Attendance, Class participation, in-class assignments, final exam, quizzes, etc.)	<p>Intermediate Exam: 50%</p> <p>Final Exam: 50%</p> <p>These exams should be understood as a means to reflect upon and recapitulate the topics covered in class. The intermediate exam will encompass the content of the first half of the course, while the final exam will cover the latter half.</p> <p>Students have the opportunity to earn an additional 10% through extra credits by preparing a report. To do so, they must compose a report of 1200 words (main text) on a topic of their choice that has already been</p>

	<p>discussed or will be discussed during the course.</p> <p>This report must address a specific question regarding the chosen topic, and students are required to adhere to academic standards. This entails constructing a comprehensive argument supported by factual evidence. Any ideas or thoughts derived from sources must be properly cited, and all reference materials used must be included in the bibliography at the end of the report.</p> <p>Merely expressing an opinion is insufficient; students must substantiate their opinions with a comprehensive argument based on the literature.</p> <p>Any student who submits a report and passes it will receive at least a passing grade for the course, provided they have achieved at least 20% in either written exam. The report is due on the final day of class and must be submitted in printed form before the commencement of the final exam.</p>
Other comments	-
Class schedule	<p>*July 1: Orientation</p> <p>*July 3: No-Class Day</p> <p>[DAY 1]……Introduction</p> <p>[DAY 2] ……Interpreting Japanese Society – Japanese and Western approaches Reading: Sugimoto Yoshino: “The nihonjinron – Thinking Elites’ Ideas of Japanese Uniqueness”. In: Cultural nationalism in contemporary Japan - A sociological enquiry. Routledge, 1992, pp. 81-96.</p> <p>[DAY 3] ……Shaping core values – Gender Reading: a) Koyama Shizuko: “Domestic Roles and the Incorporation of Women into the Nation-State”. In: Andrea Germer (et.al.) (eds.): Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan. Routledge, 2014, pp. 85-100.</p> <p>Reading: b) Cook, Theodore F. Jr.: “Making ‘Soldiers’: The Imperial Army and the Japanese Man in Meiji Society and State”. In: Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (eds.): Gendering Modern Japanese History. Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 259-294.</p> <p>[DAY 4] ……Marriage and family Ölschleger, Hans Dieter: “Family”. In: Josef Kreiner, Ulrich Möhwald, and Hans Dieter Ölschleger (eds.): Modern Japanese Society. Brill, 2004, pp. 351-386.</p>

	<p>Class and stratification – The myth of a middle-class society… and now?</p> <p>Reading: Sugimoto Yoshio: “Class and Stratification – An Overview”. In: An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 35-59.</p>
	<p>[DAY 5] ……Youth and education</p> <p>Reading: a) Toyama-Bialke, Chisaki: “Adolescence”. In: Josef Kreiner, Ulrich Möhwald, and Hans Dieter Ölschleger (eds.): Modern Japanese Society. Brill, 2004, pp. 63-82.</p> <p>Reading: b) Foljanty-Jost, Gesine: “Education and Educational Policy”. In: Josef Kreiner, Ulrich Möhwald, and Hans Dieter Ölschleger (eds.): Modern Japanese Society. Brill, 2004, pp. 83-109.</p>
	<p>[DAY 6] ……Class and stratification – The myth of a middle-class society… and now?</p> <p>Reading: Sugimoto Yoshio: “Class and Stratification – An Overview”. In: An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 35-59.</p>
	<p>[DAY 7] ……Intermediate Exam</p>
	<p>[DAY 8] ……Political System</p> <p>Reading: Ellington, Lucien: “Government and Politics”. In: Japan. ABC Clio, 2009, pp. 74-103</p>
	<p>[DAY 9] ……Work life</p> <p>Reading: Sugimoto Yoshio: “Varieties in Work and Labor”. In: An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 86-113.</p>
	<p>[DAY 10] ……Demographic change</p> <p>Reading a): Atoh, Makoto: “Japan’s Population Growth During the Past 100 Years”. In: Florian Coulmas (et al. eds.): The Demographic Challenge – A Handbook About Japan. Brill, 2008, pp. 5-24.</p> <p>Reading b): Ölschleger, Hans Dieter: “Fertility and Mortality”. In: Florian Coulmas (et al. eds.): The Demographic Challenge – A Handbook About Japan. Brill, 2008, pp. 25-40.</p>
	<p>[DAY 11] ……Media</p> <p>Reading: Löhr, Marc: “The Mass Media”. In: Josef Kreiner, Ulrich Möhwald, and Hans Dieter Ölschleger (eds.): Modern Japanese Society. Brill, 2004, pp. 435-488.</p>
	<p>[DAY 12] ……Popular Culture</p> <p>Reading a): Treat, John Whittier. “Introduction: Japanese Studies into Cultural Studies”. In: J. W. Treat (ed.): Contemporary Japan and Popular</p>

	Culture. University of Hawaii Press, 1996, pp. 1-14.
	Reading b): Craig, Tim: "Introduction". In: Tim Craig (ed.): Japan Pop! Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture. Sharpe, 2000, pp. 3-26.
	[DAY 13] Minorities Reading: Sugimoto Yoshio: " Minority Groups – Ethnicity and Discrimination". In: An Introduction to Japanese Society. Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 183-211.
	[DAY 14] Final Exam / Report

*Course format, evaluation methods and class schedule may be subject to change.

[Important Note Regarding Class Capacity]

Course enrollment in each course is on a first-come, first-served basis. Please be aware that once the maximum capacity is reached, you will no longer be able to select that course.

If you plan to transfer the credits to your home university, please consider alternative courses as well when making your study plan, in case the courses you want to take are full.