Course description:

This course examines various facets of Japanese modernity within modern and contemporary historical contexts. Japanese modern history since the Meiji Revolution of 1868 presents us with two conflicting but intertwined narratives of modernity, the pursuit of political, economic, and technological progress on one hand, and lived experiences of social stratification, conflicts, and violence on the other. This course puts into question the concept of modernity by looking at people’s lived experiences of changing ideologies, institutions, and material conditions in modern and contemporary history (i.e. from 1868 to the present day).

This course is divided into three main units: 1) the issues of state-building including imperialism, Western civilization, and national identity; 2) the politics of sex and gender (i.e. the historical development of feminism, gendered discourses of reproduction and motherhood, and state regulation of sexuality); and 3) nuclear technology and industrial disasters as a window into the human-nature relationship.

Proposed assignments:

- Active participation in classroom discussions (20%)
- Two book review essays (each paper 10%, total 20%)
- A research paper (20%)
- Midterm & Final Exams (essay questions, each exam 20%, total 40%)

Proposed reading list: