GHENT UNIVERSITY

Course Specifications

Valid as from the academic year 2026-2027

History of Japan (A002930)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)	English	Gent	lecture

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Uhl, Christian	LW21	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China (China Track))	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China (UGent Track))	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject India)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Japan)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Exchange Programme History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in Gender and Diversity	5	A
Elective Set Culture and Society	5	A
Elective Set History	5	A
Elective Set Languages of Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

History, Japan

Position of the course

This course introduces you to the history of the Japanese archipelago from the proto-historic period to the modern and conteporary times. In this process, we will also address general issues in historiography, social theory, and political philosophy. The course provides all students of Asian studies with indispensible basic knowledge about their area of choice, but is generally recommended to everyone who wants to know more about the past and present of what is today the third or fourth biggest economy of the world.

Contents

The focus of this course is set on the history of political institutions and political economy (social organization) and covers the archaic period, the adoption, consolidation and decline of the ancient Chinese-style *ritsuryou*-order, the dawn, solidification and dissolution of the various subsequent feudal forms of social formation in the medieval and early modern periods, the rise and demise of Japan as a constitutional monarchy, and the splendor and misery of Japan as a parliamentary democracy. In focussing on structures and processes of transformation rather then the archival contingencies of sheer event history, we will have plenty of opportunities to also address questions of larger, more general concern. What are Confucianism, or Buddhism? What does "feudal" mean, and what does the word "modern" imply? What is a nation state? How do we conceptualize capitalism, fascism or democracy? And, above all: what do we actually mean, when we think or speak of the past as "history"?

Initial competences

Secondary education degree. Solid knowledge of English. Being able to follow and understand texts and explanations written or given in English. (The teaching material is mainly in English).

Final competences

1 Knowing the arguably significant historical events and basic developments of the history of Japan
2 Being aware of the tension between the historical facts of the matter and the problem of their interpretation and (re)presentation
3 Being able to use critically historiographical and other secondary sources concerning Japanese history in order to obtain and evaluate information
4 Having demonstrated if and in how far you are capable of using provided material in order to discuss issues of Japanese history.
5 Being able to apply general concepts, such as state, society, feudalism, class, modernity, etc. Having an awareness of the epistemic surplus and the limitations of such concepts

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

lecture (on campus, with lecture recordings only individually and if required).

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: A History of Japan
Indicative price: € 60
Optional: no
Language : English
Author : Conrad Totman
ISBN : 1-405-12359-1
Number of Pages : 684
Alternative : none
Oldest Usable Edition : Blackwell Pub; 2nd edition (January 14, 2005)
Available in the Library : Yes
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : regularly
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally
Additional information: In the humanities, purchasing and even reading a book every now and then is a common, ordinary activity.

Type: Handbook

Name: Keizers en Shogun: Een Geschiedenis Van Japan Tot 1868
Indicative price: € 31
Optional: no
Language : Dutch
Author : Willem Boot
ISBN : 9-462-98029-2
Number of Pages : 127
Alternative : none
Oldest Usable Edition : 2005
Available in the Library : Yes
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally
Additional information: In the humanities, purchasing and even reading a book every now and then is a common,

ordinary activity.

Type: Syllabus

Name: lecture scripts
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Number of Pages : 100
Oldest Usable Edition : 2017
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Additional information: The lecture scripts are authored by the lecturer, Christian Uhl, and summarize the content per lecture that is relevant for the exam.

References

Course content-related study coaching

Interactive support via e-mail or MS Teams, personally on appointment.

Assessment moments

end-of-term assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with multiple-choice questions, Written assessment with open-ended questions, Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment with multiple-choice questions, Written assessment with open-ended questions, Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

Periodical: written exam with open and multiple choice questions (100%): the exam has to passed, i.e. the student has to obtain at the least 10 of 20 possible points.

Calculation of the examination mark

Periodical exam (100%) counted on 20 possible credit points in total.

Facilities for Working Students

1. Participation in educational activities is required
2. The examination cannot be rescheduled.
3. Feedback can be given during an appointment during office hours.