

# Politics of East Asia

Politics 140d • Class Number 50357 • Spring 2026  
University of California, Santa Cruz

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Tutor: Lennox **White** (lealwhit@ucsc.edu)  
Course web site: <https://canvas.ucsc.edu>  
Prof. Read's web site: <https://benread.net>  
Class meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:00–9:35am, Thimann Lecture Hall 1  
Prof. Read's office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:35–10:05am, outside Thimann Lecture Hall, and  
Wednesdays 11:00am-12:00pm, on Zoom  
For Zoom, please sign up at: <https://tinyurl.com/benreadofficehours>  
You may also email me to make an appointment outside these time slots.  
Date of this syllabus: March 25, 2026. Subject to change; check Canvas for latest version.

## Overview and Goals:

In this course, we explore politics in East Asia. The central focus is on three core cases: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. I have chosen this focus because they lend themselves to many productive comparisons, and because I teach two other courses specifically on China (Politics 141 and Politics 161). Issues and problems of governance, democratization, democracy, and representation in these countries constitute the intellectual core of the class. We examine the historical development of the East Asian state system prior to and especially after World War II; the tension between external pressures (including influence by the United States) and nationalism; major leaders; authoritarian systems of the 20th century and processes of democratization; economic development; government institutions; political parties; civil society; extra-institutional protest and contention; women in politics; immigration and immigrant incorporation; and the politics of recognizing and representing indigenous groups. This is primarily a course in comparative domestic politics, but we also consider external relations (such as with China and North Korea) as well, with an eye toward understanding linkages between the domestic and the international.

What do we aim to accomplish here? In other words, what are the “learning outcomes” of this course? You will: 1) Learn essential information about politics in the three core cases, and about how politics there relates to history, culture, society, and the economy. 2) Through cross-national comparison, gain a deeper understanding of general concepts and themes with lasting importance in politics and the broader social sciences. 3) Develop your reading and research skills: your ability to find and grasp information in articles, chapters, and books. 4) Sharpen your communication skills: your ability to convey your own thoughts and arguments through writing and speaking.

This course is one of the Politics Department's undergraduate core courses. Politics majors must take at least four such courses, and completing any three of them fulfills the university's Disciplinary Communication requirement.

## Readings:

All required readings will be available on the course site on the Canvas system.

## Assignments and Ground Rules:

- Please read the following items carefully before deciding to stay enrolled in this course.

- **Attending the lectures and sections is a firm requirement.** Attendance will be taken at every session. If you are unable to attend class because you are sick, we will treat that as an excused absence if informed immediately. If you are sick and miss lecture, send an explanatory email on the same day to Prof. Read. If you are sick and miss section, send an explanatory email on the same day to your teaching assistant. Two percentage points will be deducted from your course grade for every further unexcused absence from class. To put that in perspective, the difference between a B+ and a C+ is ten percentage points. Students who, regardless of reason, miss more than four classes (lectures or sections) will not pass the course. Good attendance, on the other hand, will be rewarded with bonus points.
- **Doing the reading:** This course involves a substantial amount of reading and you are required to do it. Readings must be completed before the lecture for which they are assigned. Note that although I have strived to make it easy for you to find the readings, it is your responsibility to obtain and read these items. Download the readings from Canvas ahead of time. I would read them on a tablet or computer display (or you could print them) rather than a small phone screen.
- **Academic integrity and generative artificial intelligence (AI):**
  - Honesty and transparency are essential to the academic world. You are expected to present your own original work and acknowledge the work of others in order to preserve the integrity of scholarship.
  - In this class, I ask that you complete your work without using AI-generated sources to augment, think through, or write your assignments. Ordinary tools for spell-checking and grammar-checking your paper are fine, but not the use of AI to polish or revise the paper.
  - Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student's transcript. For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students should refer to the [Academic Misconduct](#) page at the Division of Undergraduate Education.
- **Email:** You must use and regularly check your official email account, i.e., the one that AIS and Canvas send to.
- **Classroom participation and etiquette:**
  - Come prepared for class, and contribute actively to class discussion.
  - Please do everything you can to be present and focused throughout the scheduled time period.
- **Assignments:** Grades are calculated on the basis of the following assignments, though the exact percentages are subject to adjustment. To pass Poli 140d, you must complete each of the following assignments, other than the self-introduction; no component below may be failed or disregarded.
  - Self-introduction: please send me an email in the first week of class introducing yourself. You may wish to lay out such basic facts as your year in school; college; major; prior courses (if any) in Asian languages, history, or politics, and in comparative politics; experience living or traveling outside the U.S. (if any); future career interests; what you're most excited about in school and in your life; any challenges you're facing; and anything else you would like me to know about you. It can be useful for me to know such things, but really I would just like to read whatever you would like to tell me about yourself. **Strongly encouraged but not required or graded**
  - Do the assigned reading for a given day prior to the start of that day's lecture. A set of discussion questions will be circulated in advance (via Announcements; a cumulative list of discussion questions is maintained under Files). We will discuss these questions in class and in section, and versions of the questions will appear on the midterm and final.
  - Class participation, including attendance at lectures and sections: 15 percent
  - In-class midterm examination (to be held during lecture, Thursday, April 30, 2026): 30 percent
  - Introduction, outline, and bibliography of research paper (due Saturday, May 9, 2026, 5pm): 5 percent
  - Completed research paper (due Sunday, June 7, 2026, noon): 15 percent
  - Note that some students will be asked to give oral briefings to the instructors on their research paper and its sources, which will also compose a part of the paper grade.
  - Final exam (Wednesday, June 10, 2026, 8:00–11:00am, in the lecture hall): 35 percent
- **Time Commitment:** The UCSC Academic Senate reminds us: "Systemwide Senate Regulation 760 specifies that one academic credit corresponds to three hours of work per week for students during a 10-week quarter. This means that the average workload for a 5-credit course is 15 hours or 15 hours per week." With this in mind, expect to spend each week, on average:
  - Lectures: 3 hours and 10 minutes
  - Reading, note-taking, and review for the exams: 6 hours and 50 minutes

- Research and writing for the paper: 5 hours
- **Accommodations:** UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. We would also like to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. We encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu).
- **Course materials:**
  - **Slides and video recording:** Within a few days after each lecture I will post the slides and (via YuJa) a video recording. The recording is mainly in case you had to miss class for some good reason. Please bear in mind that these are for your personal use only and shouldn't be distributed or posted on the public internet. The Academic Senate has asked faculty to include a note to this effect, as follows:
  - **Warning from the university about distribution of lecture notes and materials:** Please note that students may be disciplined for selling, preparing, or distributing course lecture notes, including notes created independently by students. The unauthorized sale of lecture notes, handouts, readers or other course materials is a violation of campus policies as well as state law. Violation by distribution to the public may also constitute copyright infringement subject to legal action.
- **Tutoring:** There is tutoring available for this class, provided by [Learning Support Services \(LSS\)](#).
  - Learning Support Services tutors are an important part of the teaching team and are here to help you be successful. [Tutoring](#) is for everyone and open to all students to provide extra practice on the things you already know or the things you want to know better.
  - Your tutor (in spring 2026: Lennox White) is an undergraduate student who took the class, did well, and received extensive training on how to help you learn. Sessions are one hour long, available several days a week and attendance is voluntary.
  - Why attend? Easy: students who attend sessions weekly tend to earn a higher final grade than students who do not participate.
  - Ask your tutor for more information about session times, visit the LSS [website](#), or visit [in person at the ARCcenter](#). You can also view your tutor's schedule and sign up on [Tutor Hub](#).

## Detailed Schedule

### Introduction to the Course

Tuesday, March 31, 2026

- No readings are assigned for the first class session.

### Historical Background

Thursday, April 2, 2026

- Louis D. Hayes, *Introduction to Japanese Politics*, 6th edition (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2018), chapter 1, "General History"
- Michael Edson Robinson, chapter 2, "Colonial State and Society," in *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 36–55
- John Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* (2012), part of Chapter 1 (pp. 1–18); part of Chapter 2 (pp. 30–41)

Optional further reading

- Christina Lai, "Norm Contestation and Framing Strategies: The Home Rule Movements in Taiwan and Korea During Japan's Colonial Era," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 25 (2024) 223–246

## Origins of the East Asian Order

Tuesday, April 7, 2026

- Louis D. Hayes, *Introduction to Japanese Politics* (2018), all of chapter 2, “The Occupation”
- Michael Edson Robinson, chapter 5, “Liberation, Civil War, and Division,” in *Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 100–120
- John Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* (2012), part of Chapter 2, pp. 41–51

## Authoritarianism

Thursday, April 9, 2026

- Byung-Kook Kim, “Labyrinth of Solitude: Park and the Exercise of Presidential Power,” in Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (eds.), *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 140–167
- Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan: Voting for Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1999), chapter 3, “Party-State Authoritarianism in the Pre-Reform Era (1945–1972)” and part of chapter 4, “Electoral Mobilization in the Pre-Reform Era (1945–1972),” 55–93

## Economic Growth and the “Developmental State” Idea

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

- John Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* (2012), part of Chapter 5 (150–170)
- Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), chapter 1, 3–34
- Gregory W. Noble, “Industrial Policy in Key Developmental Sectors: South Korea Versus Japan and Taiwan,” in Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (eds.), *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 603–28
- Chris Miller, ““We Want a Semiconductor Industry in Taiwan,”” Chapter 29 of *Chip War: The Fight for the World’s Most Critical Technology* (New York: Scribner, 2022), 163–169

## Democratization

Thursday, April 16, 2026

- Uk Heo and Terence Roehrig, “From Dictatorship to Democracy,” chapter 2 of *South Korea Since 1980* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28–50
- Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan: Voting for Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1999), chapter 5, “Political Reform under Chiang Ching-kuo (1972–1988)”

## Post-Democratization Issues and Problems

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

- Louis D. Hayes, *Introduction to Japanese Politics* (2018), Chapter 6 on corruption
- Jennifer Williams, “The Bizarre Political Scandal That Just Led to the Impeachment of South Korea’s President,” *Vox*, March 9, 2017. This is a short piece conveying the basics of the 2016-17 downfall of Park Geun-hye.
- Nien-Chung Chang-Liao and Yu-Jie Chen, “Transitional Justice in Taiwan: Changes and Challenges,” *Washington International Law Journal* 28:3 (2019)
- Nathan F. Batto and Emily Beaulieu, *Making Punches Count: The Individual Logic of Legislative Brawls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), parts of chapters 2 and 3: pp. 20-28, 39–45, 53–70

Optional further reading

- Chin-Shou Wang and Charles Kurzman, “Logistics: How to Buy Votes,” in Frederic Charles Schaffer (ed.), *Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 61–78

## The (Developmental?) State Today

Thursday, April 23, 2026

- Gregory W. Noble, “METI’s Miraculous Comeback and the Uncertain Future of Japanese Industrial Policy,” in Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics* (2021), 353–376
- *The Economist*, three short articles: “After Half a Century of Success, the Asian Tigers Must Reinvent Themselves,” “Asian-Tiger Governments are Steering Their Economies with a Lighter Touch,” and “Does Democracy Hurt or Help Growth in the Tiger Economies of Asia?,” December 5, 2019
- Su, Tsai-Tsu. “Civil Service Reforms in Taiwan,” in *Public Administration in East Asia: Mainland China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan*, edited by Evan M. Berman, M. Jae Moon, and Heungsuk Choi (Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press, 2010), 609–26

## The Fundamentals of Governing Institutions

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

- Louis D. Hayes, *Introduction to Japanese Politics* (2018), all of Chapter 3
- John Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* (2012), part of Chapter 4 (pp. 108–130)

## In-Class Midterm Exam

Thursday, April 30, 2026

**Students will take a blue-book midterm in class**

## Presidentialism in South Korea and Taiwan

Tuesday, May 5, 2026 **Note: Prof. Read will be away at a conference; lecture will be pre-recorded on Canvas and we will not meet in person today. Sections meet as normal this week.**

- Juan J. Linz, “The Perils of Presidentialism,” *Journal of Democracy*, 1:1 (Winter 1990), 51–69
- Choe Sang-Hun and Pablo Robles, “[How South Korea’s President Planned a Military Takeover, Then Blew It](#),” *New York Times* (March 10, 2025). It’s best to read this multimedia piece online rather than as a PDF.
- Kharis Templeman, “[Taiwan Is on the Brink of a Constitutional Crisis](#),” blog post, January 19, 2025
- Dafydd Fell, “Taiwan’s Government and Constitutional Structure,” chapter 4 of *Government and Politics in Taiwan* (Routledge, 2012)

Optional further reading

- Chan Wook Park, “The National Assembly in Democratized Korea: Marching to the Center from the Margins of Policy Stage?” in Zheng Yongnian, Lye Liang Fook, and Wilhelm Hofmeister (eds.), *Parliaments in Asia: Institution Building and Political Development* (Routledge, 2014), 185–206
- Yuko Kasuya (ed.), *Presidents, Assemblies and Policy-Making in Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

## Parliamentarism and LDP Dominance in Japan

Thursday, May 7, 2026

- Louis D. Hayes, *Introduction to Japanese Politics* (2018): All of Chapter 4, and part of Chapter 7 (pp. 99–106)
- Michael F. Thies, “The Era of Coalition Government in Japan: The Institutional Logic of Surplus Majorities and Strange Bedfellows,” in Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics* (2021), 57–74

Optional further reading

- Ronald J. Hrebenar and Koji Haraguchi, “The Fall of the DPJ and Return of the LDP to Power: The December 2012 House Elections,” in Ronald J. Hrebenar and Akira Nakamura (eds.), *Party Politics in Japan: Political Chaos and Stalemate in the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2015), 174–188
- Aurelia George Mulgan, “The Role of the Prime Minister in Japan,” in Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics* (2021), 57–74

## **Parties and Party Systems**

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

- Ethan Scheiner and Michael F. Thies, “The Political Opposition in Japan,” in Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics* (2021), 223–244
- Soon-ok Shin, “The Rise and Fall of Park Geun-hye: The Perils of South Korea’s Weak Party System,” *The Pacific Review* 33:1 (2020), 153–183
- Lev Nachman, “Routine Problems: Movement Party Institutionalization and the Case of Taiwan’s New Power Party,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 58 (2023), 537–556

Optional further reading

- Louis D. Hayes, *Introduction to Japanese Politics* (2018), Chapter 5

## **Civil Society**

Thursday, May 14, 2026

- Robert Pekkanen, “Japan: Social Capital without Advocacy,” in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia: Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 223–256
- Richard Madsen, “Tzu Chi [慈济]: The Modernization of Buddhist Compassion,” chapter 2 of *Democracy’s Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 16–50

## **Protest and Contention**

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

- Mi Park, “South Korea: Passion, Patriotism, and Student Radicalism,” in Meredith L. Weiss and Edward Aspinall (eds.), *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 125–152
- Ian Rowen, “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement: Twenty-Four Days in a Student-Occupied Parliament, and the Future of the Region,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 74:1 (2015), 5–21

Optional further reading

- David Slater et al., “SEALDs (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy): Research Note on Contemporary Youth Politics in Japan,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol. 13, Issue 37, 2015
- Patricia G. Steinhoff, “Japan: Student Activism in an Emerging Democracy,” in Meredith L. Weiss and Edward Aspinall, eds., *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 57–78

## **Women in Politics**

Thursday, May 21, 2026

- Young-Im Lee, “Park Geun-hye and Tsai Ing-wen: The First Female Presidents of South Korea and Taiwan,” in J. Bruce Jacobs, Niki J.P. Alsford, and Sojin Lim (eds.), *Assessing the Landscape of Taiwan and Korean Studies in Comparison* (Brill, 2021), 127–158
- Chang-Ling Huang, “Gender Quotas in Taiwan: The Impact of Global Diffusion,” *Politics & Gender*, 11/1 (2015), 207–217

Optional further reading

- Alisa Gaunder, “Quota Nonadoption in Japan: The Role of the Women’s Movement and the Opposition,” *Politics & Gender*, 11/1 (2015), 176–186

- Jiso Yoon and Ki-young Shin, “Mixed Effects of Legislative Quotas in South Korea,” *Politics & Gender*, 11/1 (2015), 186–195
- Devin K. Joshi and Kara Kingma, “The Uneven Representation of Women in Asian Parliaments: Explaining Variation across the Region,” *African and Asian Studies*, 12 (2013), 352–372

## **Immigration and Immigrant Incorporation**

Tuesday, May 26, 2026

Erin Aeran Chung, *Immigrant Incorporation in East Asian Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), chapter 4, “I Can’t Be Tanaka’: Understanding Immigrant Incorporation Through Migrant Voices,” 86–130

## **Indigenous Politics in Japan and Taiwan**

Thursday, May 28, 2026

- Kharis Templeman, “When Do Electoral Quotas Advance Indigenous Representation? Evidence from the Taiwanese Legislature,” *Ethnopolitics* (2018), 1–24
- Simon Cotterill, “Ainu Success: The Political and Cultural Achievements of Japan’s Indigenous Minority,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 9, Issue 12 (2011), 1–21

## **Divided Nations and Contested Sovereignty I: The Koreas**

Tuesday, June 2, 2026

- Ji Young Choi, “Grappling with North Korea,” in *The Politics of South Korea: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2025)
- Sydney Seiler, “North Korea: Revisionist Ambitions and the Changing International Order,” web commentary, *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, April 24, 2025
- George Hutchinson, “Lee Jae Myung’s END Strategy: Path to Progress or Dead End?” web commentary, *38 North*, December 9, 2025

## **Divided Nations and Contested Sovereignty II: China and Taiwan**

Thursday, June 4, 2026

- Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), chapters 7 and 8, 133–185
- Oriana Skylar Mastro, “The Taiwan Temptation: Why Beijing Might Resort to Force,” *Foreign Affairs* 100:4 (July / August 2021), 58–67

**Research paper due Sunday, June 7, 2026, noon**

**Final exam: Wednesday, June 10, 2026, 8:00–11:00am**

- Note that the final exam must be taken at the above time; alternative times cannot be arranged.