

University of Duisburg-Essen	Institute of East Asian Studies IN-EAST
Thursdays, 8:30– 10:00 in LE 736 Summer term 2015	Vitali Heidt/Melanie Wacker

Research on Japanese Social Institutional Change

[Preliminary syllabus]

1. Course description

The course accompanies the course “Institutions and Organizations in Japan” (hereafter “Institutions”). In this seminar we will focus mainly on methodological, technical and practical issues of social scientific research on Japan. Participants will develop research competence in the fields of sociology/political science of Japan by becoming acquainted with various methods of information gathering (general and Japan-specific) and processing, as well as research techniques. In addition, you will apply these skills practically by conducting small research exercises in class or as assignments. We will also discuss methodological issues based on your work and the “Institutions” class.

Upon successful completion, seminar participants will be able to conduct research in the field of social science and in using a variety of international and Japanese sources on social and political development in Japan. Participants will also receive support for dealing with methodological issues related to their module research paper. Research exercises are geared toward the successful completion of the research paper and guide the participants through the various steps of academic paper-writing.

2. Requirements (will count for 25% of module grade for AEAS 1)

- Participants are expected to attend the course regularly, to read the required texts, and prepare the class assignments.
- Participants are required to conduct research independently in the context of several small research exercises. Research strategies and results will be reviewed and discussed in class.

3. Course material

All readings for the course are posted on Moodle (together with the material for the “Institutions” class) and students are expected to download and print the course materials themselves as appropriate.

4. Contact and office hours

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Course schedule

1 Thursday, 9 April **Introduction**

- Areas of interest
- Prior methodological/research knowledge,
- Use of reference management software
- Do's and Don'ts oral presentations
- How the course assignments will lead up to your research paper: Module schedule and your own time management
- IN-EAST Guidelines for written assignments (formal requirements, plagiarism, declaration of originality)

2 Thursday, 16 April **Institutionalist approaches for research**

- Research-centered discussion of institutionalist approaches
- Research ideas for student papers

Required assignments:

- Read Immergut, Ellen and Anderson, Karen (2008): Historical institutionalism and Western European Politics. In: *West European Politics*. 31: 1, pp. 345-369. Note down any questions you have and come prepared to discuss.
- Come prepared with ideas for your potential research topic and research question
- Check the IN-EAST guidelines for written assignments. If anything is unclear, note down your question and ask it in class.

3 Thursday, 23 April **Research idea and research design**

- Research Design
- Research Questions

Required assignments:

- Read Flick, Uwe (2011): Introducing Research Methodology. A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project, Chapter 2: *From Research Idea to Research Question*, pp. 18-30.
- Consider how the information in the text relates to your own topic and come up with ideas for your research design. If appropriate, refine your research question. Bring your notes on these points to class.
- Read 'Research strategies' text

4 Thursday, 30 April **Research strategy/Writing a paper**

- Research tools (Cross Asia, Google Scholar, other databases)
- How to structure a research paper
- Writing strategies

Required assignments:

- Find two major journal articles on your chosen topic and document your research process in written form. Start your literature database with these (or add them to your database if you have already started) and print out an overview and bring it to class.
- Read Flick (2011) Chapter 3 Reading and Reviewing the Literature.

5 Thursday, 7 May **Media data**

- Traditional media: Newspapers, magazines
- Social media
- How to access media data and how to use it

Required assignments:

- Read Flick's chapter on analyzing "qualitative and quantitative data" (Chapter 8)
- Conduct a sample search on your topic and find sources in traditional and/or social media. Briefly document your search, method and results. Add those sources that are actually useful for your research paper into your literature database, print out an overview and bring it to class.

6 Thursday, 14 May **Holiday**

7 Thursday, 21 May **Survey data on Japan**

- Introduction: survey data
- JGSS
- ISSP
- WVS
- Introduction: Working with Survey Data (Dr. Chih-Chieh Wang)

Required assignments:

- Look at the websites of the social surveys ISSP, JGSS and WVS answer the following questions:
 - a. To what extent are the surveys different?
 - b. Which of these surveys would be best to study your chosen topic? Why?
 - c. If you think none of the surveys would be useful to study your topic, be prepared to explain why that is and what kind of survey would be better suited.
- Work on your literature review. Send in your literature review to Heidt/Wacker by e-mail by Wednesday, June 3.

8 Thursday, 28 May **Working with Survey Data (with Chih-Chieh Wang)**

tba

Required assignments:

9 Thursday, 4 June Holiday

10 Thursday, 11 June Government and official data

- White books
- Government statistics
- NDL

Required assignments:

- Read Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2014): White Paper on General Welfare and Labour

Answer the following questions:

- How does the MHLW relate to population changes?
- Does it have an official policy on how the issue of social security (and its spending) should be addressed in future?
- What reforms are considered necessary by the MHLW?

11 Thursday, June 18 Comparative Data on social development

Comparative measurements of welfare and social development (e.g. UN, OECD)

- Japan in comparative perspective
- How to use descriptive comparative data in single country studies

Roundtable on Research Projects

- Progress
- Problems

Required assignments:

- Read Chapter 2 (pp. 77-83) OECD (2014): Society at a glance 2014. OECD social indicators. The crisis and its aftermath, Paris: OECD. Choose one indicator in the report that corresponds with your research topic and read the respective part of the report, too.
- Short written statement about your progress: Where in the research process are you? What are your next steps? What are problems you encountered? (half a page or bullet points is sufficient)

12 Thursday, June 25 TBA

Tba

13 Thursday, July 2 Presentation and feedback on paper drafts

14 Thursday, July 9 Presentation and feedback on paper drafts

15 Thursday, July 16 (back-up date: Presentation and feedback on paper drafts)