

Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

THE SUPREME COURT OF JAPAN: STRUCTURE, FUNCTION, CASE LAW

Subtitle	The Supreme Court of Japan: Structure, Function, Case Law
Lecturer(s)	ORTOLANI, ANDREA
Credit(s)	2
Academic Year/Semester	2025 Spring (2nd Half)
Day/Period	Thu.1,2
Campus	Mita
Classroom	443
Class Format	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
Registration Number	51399
Faculty/Graduate School	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Year Level	2, 3, 4
Grade Type	S, A, B, C, D
K-Number	CIN-CO-00253-212-05

▼ Detail

Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

This course focuses on the Supreme Court of Japan.
The first lessons will introduce the origin, structure and functions of the Japanese judiciary and in particular the Supreme Court, who its judges are and how they got there.
The second part of the course will provide an overview of the most important cases decided by the Supreme Court.
Depending on circumstances and availability, one lesson may consist of a field trip to the Supreme Court. Some lessons will be based on student presentations or teamwork.

Active Learning Methods ⓘ [Description](#)

Presentations
Group work

Preparatory Study

Students should have a basic knowledge of Japanese history and society in the 20th century. A legal background is not required, but students unfamiliar with basic concepts of constitutional and procedural law will need to fill in the gaps.

Course Plan

Lesson 1

Introduction to the course.
Judicial review in Japan.

Lesson 2

Provisions on the courts and on the Supreme Court.

Lesson 3

Provisions on the courts and on the Supreme Court.

Lesson 4

The judges of the Supreme Court; administrative staff.

Lesson 5

The legal professions. The judges of the Supreme Court; administrative staff.

Lesson 6

Administrative functions and judicial independence.

Lesson 7

Administrative functions and judicial independence.

Lesson 8

The role of precedents at the Supreme Court. Case law on art. 9.

Lesson 9

The role of precedents at the Supreme Court. Case law on art. 9.

Lesson 10

Case law on State and religion.

Lesson 11

Case law on State and religion.

Lesson 12

Case law on human and civil rights.

Lesson 13

Case law on human and civil rights.

Lesson 14

Depending on availability, visit to the Supreme Court and/or to the Ministry of Justice.

Other

Session for Q&A, discussion.

Method of Evaluation

Attendance and participation (50%), mini-exams (take-home exams, 50%).
Details about the evaluation standards will be given in lesson 1.

Textbooks

There is no mandatory textbook.
All mandatory and suggested reading materials will be provided by the instructor.

Reference Books

Shigenori Matsui, *The Constitution of Japan: A Contextual Analysis*, Hart Publishing, 2011.
Hiroshi Itoh, *The Supreme Court and benign elite democracy in Japan*, Ashgate Publishing, 2010.
"Decision Making on the Japanese Supreme Court", 88 Wash. U. L. Rev. 1365-1780 (2011) (Symposium issue of the Washington University Law Review)

Lecturer's Comments to Students

All classes and all readings will be in English. Some optional readings may be in other languages.
A background in law is not a condition for attending the classes, but participants should have a basic knowledge of modern Japanese constitutional history (please refer to the suggested books).
Feedback on the assignments will be provided during office hours or via email.
Workload for the course will consist in reading about 30 pages per week, occasional team presentations and in 1 or 2 mini-exams (take-home exams).

Question/Comments

Students can contact the instructor at the end of the classes or by email (details will be given during the class).