

Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE LAW

Subtitle	History and current features of the Japanese legal system
Lecturer(s)	ORTOLANI, ANDREA
Credit(s)	2
Academic Year/Semester	2026 Fall(2nd Half)
Day/Period	Thu.1,2
Campus	Mita
Classroom	445
Class Format	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
Registration Number	80227
Faculty/Graduate School	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Year Level	2, 3, 4
Grade Type	S, A, B, C, D
Course Description	A course to aim to learn the history and the main current characteristics of the Japanese legal system.
K-Number	CIN-CO-00253-212-05

[▼ Detail](#)

Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

This course provides an overview of the history and current features of the Japanese legal system. The first lessons will explore its historical development, with a focus on the adoption of Western legal models during the Meiji era and the subsequent consolidation of the legal framework in the 20th century. The second part will cover several key aspects of contemporary Japanese constitutional, private and criminal law and procedure. Active student participation is expected.

Course Taught by Faculty Member with Professional Experience

Not applicable

Active Learning Methods [Description](#)

Presentations
Group work

Preparatory Study

Students should have a basic understanding of Japanese history and society, as lessons will frequently refer to the historical and social context in which laws were developed.

Course Plan

Lesson 1

Introduction to the course

Lesson 2

Japanese law before 1868

Lesson 3

Meiji Restoration and the reception of Western law

Lesson 4

The Meiji Constitution

Lesson 5

The Constitution of 1947: Fundamental principles, rights and duties of the people

Lesson 6

The Constitution of 1947: The Parliament, the Government of Japan

Lesson 7

Private law and the Civil Code of Japan

Lesson 8

Private law and the Civil Code of Japan

Lesson 9

History of criminal law and procedure
The legal professions and the judiciary

Lesson 10

History of criminal law and procedure
The legal professions and the judiciary

Lesson 11

Modern criminal law and procedure

Lesson 12

Modern criminal law and procedure

Lesson 13

Family law

Lesson 14

Family law

Other

Session for Q&A, discussion.

Method of Evaluation

Attendance and participation (40%), short in-class tests (3 times x 20%).

Generative AI Policy for Classes

The use of generative AI is allowed outside of the classroom.

Textbooks

There is no mandatory textbook.

Reading materials will be provided by the instructor.

Additional reference materials will be regularly mentioned during the classes.

Reference Books

Curtis J. Milhaupt, J. Mark Ramseyer, Mark D. West, *The Japanese legal system: Cases, Codes, and Commentary*, (2nd ed), New York, Foundation Press/Thomson Reuters, 2012.

Colin PA Jones and Frank S. Ravitch, *The Japanese Legal System*, West Academic, 2018.

Daniel H. Foote (ed. by), *Law in Japan: A Turning Point*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2007.

Lecturer's Comments to Students

All lectures 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 course, but participants are expected to understand some basic legal concepts or, where necessary, to independently fill any gaps in their knowledge.

Feedback will be provided after the classes or via email.

The workload will consist in (on average) three 15/20-page readings per week.

Question/Comments

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