Course Description
This course addresses major political and social issues in contemporary Japan. Students will be exposed to the main academic and policy debates over such issues as: inequality; fertility and aging; immigration; civil society; the fall of the LDP; and the March 11th disaster.

Requirements
The class will be run as a seminar and students are expected to participate actively in class discussion. Students are expected to have read the readings for the week prior to each class meeting. Every week, one student will be responsible for summarizing the week’s readings and for raising issues for discussion. Students should pay particular attention to where the different authors for the week agree and/or disagree with each other, and for what reasons. Students are also expected to write a final paper on one of the topics covered during the course of the semester (inequality, low fertility, disaster recovery, civil society, and the fall of the LDP from power). Details on the paper are below.

Evaluation
Evaluation for the course will consist of attendance (20%), class participation (50%), and final paper (30%).

Schedule
October 11th: Introduction and Overview

October 18th: Inequality in Japan


October 25th: Inequality in Japan, continued


**November 1st:** Low Fertility


**November 8th:** Low Fertility and Aging in Comparative Context


**November 15th:** The Japanese Youth


**November 22nd:** Immigration


**November 29th:** Civil Society


December 6th: Civil Society (continued)


December 13th: The Fall of the LDP


December 20th: Understanding the Disaster (1)


January 17th: Understanding the Disaster (2)


**January 24th**

**Wrap-up**

**Presentations:**
Student presentations should be 20-30 minutes in length. Students should prepare a 1-2 page handout for the class that summarizes the argument and the main points in the reading(s). In addition to summarizing the argument and the main points in the readings, the student should offer a critique of the argument advanced in the article. Do you find the argument convincing? Why or why not? To what extent does the evidence offered by the author support the argument advanced in the paper? Any additional insights from other courses, readings, anything that you know on the topic from elsewhere are also welcome.

**Paper**
The paper should address one of the major topics covered in the course. It should ask: on what issues do the authors covered in the course agree or disagree with each other? Which argument do you find the most convincing, and why? The paper should be 4-5 pages in length (A4, double-spaced, 11 or 12 point font). You are also welcome to conduct your own research on the subject or to discuss additional material that you have read in other courses or on your own. Please e-mail the paper to the instructor at kage@waka.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp by February 8th, 2012, end of the day (no extensions).