The purpose of this project is for us to read some things (academic articles and book chapters) that will help us to understand the Taisho period. Technically the Taisho emperor ruled from 1912 to 1925, but we will be looking at the Taisho period broadly, reaching from the end of the Meiji project (1905?) to the triumph of militarism in Showa (1937?). Each of you will read one article or book chapter and write a summary of it for your group. Then you and your group will, collectively, write a brief summary of what we can get from these three readings and present on it to the class. You will then each write a brief essay (basically your mid-term) answering this question.

“McClain claims (pg. 317) that during Taisho ‘many Japanese felt they were living in qualitatively new times and awoke to the possibility of crafting fresh political and social conventions that built upon the Pride of Meiji’.” What do you make of this? To what extent do you think Japanese people were “crafting fresh political and social conventions” to what extent were they building on the “Pride of Meiji”? (We will discuss this question in class, but you should be thinking about this question and how your reading/group topic related to this.)

The purpose of this is for us, collectively, to think about what was going on in Taisho. A big part of what you will draw on for the final essay will be based on what your fellow students have written and presented, and they in turn will be drawing on what you have done. You will be doing four assignments as part of this project.

-A summary of your article/chapter for your group. This should be a page or two long and summarize what you think the main points of the article are. What can we get out of this? How does this fit into the period, and what should people in the class know about this? The goal is for your group members to understand what the article/chapter says and why it matters. To do this you will need to understand the reading yourself. Some of these are more complex than others, and some are
part of a larger work. You may need to look things up, or even better ask me for help in order to be clear on what the piece is saying and how it fits into our understanding of the period.

This is worth 50 quiz points

**Your group’s written explanation of your topic** This should be 2-3+ pages, and aimed at your fellow students. What should they know about this topic in order to write their essays? Of It should not just be your three short papers pasted together. If your fellow students were using your topic to answer the essay question, what should they know or think about? Some of these sets of readings have pretty obvious connections, others will be harder to do. If you need help you should talk to me.

This is worth 100 quiz points

**Your group’s oral presentation of your topic** This should be under 5 minutes and give a clear explanation of your topic to your fellow students. Don’t just read your written paper, since the other students will have access to that. Give them a brief summary of what you think the most important things about your topic are. What could people get out of your three readings (individually and collectively) if they read them themselves? Do be prepared to answer questions.

This is worth 50 quiz points

**Your final essay** This will be a short (5-7+ page) essay that answers our question about McClain’s statement. You can draw on any and all of the readings you did and that others presented. There are lots of different ways to answer this question, so you will have to think about your essay, what thesis it is proving and how it is using evidence in an organized fashion to prove it.

This is worth 15% of your final grade

**Week one**
You will all divide yourselves into groups of three. Each group will pick one of our topics (first come first served) and then divide the three readings among your group.

**By Wednesday of Week 1** you should post at least one thing you find confusing or important about your individual reading. You really should post before Wednesday, since this is a good place for you and I to discuss your reading. If you are having problems with it, I can help.

**By Friday of Week 1** You should post your analysis of your article/chapter. This should be a page or two long, and summarize what you think the main points of the article are. What can we get out of this? How does this fit into the period, and what should people in the class know about this?

**By Wednesday of Week 2** Your group should meet and discuss your readings and collectively write and post your analysis of your topic. Your fellow students will be drawing on this for their essays.

**Week 3** Oral presentations in class. This is where you present your work to your fellow students and they ask questions about it. Please try to read, or at least glance over, the papers the other groups have posted before the presentations.

**Week 4** Turn in final essay

**Topics**
Here are the topics I came up with. If anyone has suggestions for other topics or for readings let me know. Readings with a single asterisk are on the library page. Those with two are posted on D2L under content.

**Big Picture** -These are three fairly broad articles that look at the big picture of Japan in this era.


The State and its power - This was in some respects the first time Japan had a modern bureaucracy that was trying to manage the process of social change.


**Police** The police were the most direct way the state had of shaping society.


**Military** Although the Army was not as powerful in Taisho as it was later, it was still both important and difficult to control


**Taisho Democracy** What did Democracy mean in Taisho?


**Citizenship and the People**

Diplomatic history All of our readings on diplomacy have to do with Manchuria (China’s Northeast), which was one of the most important issues in Japan’s relations with the outside world.


Pan-Asianism Although Pan-Asianism became a fairly thin cover for Japanese imperialism later on, in Taisho it sometimes meant quite different things.


Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 Probably the biggest single event of the period, and one that cause Japanese people to think a lot about what type of Japan they wanted to re-build.


Great Depression This came at the end of our period, but had a profound effect on almost everything in Japan.


The New Woman -There were several varieties of her.


**Women’s Movement** Women and politics.


**Public History** like all modern societies, the Japanese built museums and tried to decide how to create a past worth preserving.


**Protest** Popular protest did not go away after Tokugawa, but it did change.


**Religion** Both Buddhism and Shinto went through substantial changes in this period. These are all interesting readings, but also quite different.


**Technology for the people** Being modern means buying stuff!
As in Meiji, a lot of people were obsessed with harnessing technology for the good of the nation.


**Labor and Work** Japan was an industrial society by Taisho, with all the fun of modern working conditions.


**Labor and unions** While Japan did not have a particularly powerful labor movement, labor was a key political issue.


**Radicals -right** Two sections on radicals, although the Western Left and Right labels don’t always fit well.


**Radicals** -left Two sections on radicals, although the Western Left and Right labels don’t always fit well.


**Peasants** Although they were an afterthought in Japan’s modernization, they were both important and quite active.


**Family** Legal changes in the family system were mostly in the colonies at this point.


**Drugs** Can you have an empire without a drug trade? Probably not.


**Colonial Korea** Empire always matters a lot to countries that have one. We have several colonial sections


Science in Korea


Colonial Taiwan

**“From Wet Diplomacy to Scorched Earth: The Taiwan Expedition, the Guardline, and the Wushe Rebellion” from Paul D Barclay Outcasts of Empire: Japan’s Rule on Taiwan’s Savage Border, 1874-1945.. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018.


Games

History is not all work.


Cafes

The Cafe was -the- site of modern life for ordinary urban Japanese.


Music I thought Music mattered.

Consumerism You are what you buy


Literature and drama Are a big part of how people understand their world. There are a lot more readings on this sort of thing, if you want.