J6 Japanese History (Paper 18 in History)

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Course aims
J6 offers a critical survey of Japan’s history from its early beginnings to the present with a broad focus on political, intellectual and social history. For Michaelmas, we will cover Japan’s classical, medieval and early modern eras, up to the 1850s, whereas Lent Term will be devoted to Japan’s modern age (1850s to the present).

Structure
The paper meets 2 hours per week in MT and LT, combining lectures and seminars. Lectures will give students an overview of the historical eras and themes covered every week, while the seminars will be discussion sessions based on assigned readings that form the foundation for a deeper understanding of the historiographical issues in Japanese history.

Requirements
All students are expected to read the assigned readings for lectures and seminars and be prepared to discuss them both in small group settings and in front of the class. The texts will be a combination of translated primary sources, which students are asked to read carefully and critically, and secondary texts of historiographical nature. Students will also be asked to produce critical essays for each term, which will be supported and followed up by a total of four supervisions.

Form and Conduct
The exam for this paper consists of three sections containing nine essay questions of which candidates will be required to attempt one from each section.

Supervisions
There will be a minimum of two supervisions each for Mt and LT, plus an additional one in Easter. Seminars are additionally discussion-based, designed to help students identify the major historiographical trends and problems.

Class composition
The class welcomes students from both the History and the Japanese Studies Triposes, thus providing a healthy mix of historical and language expertise. Familiarity with Japanese or History is not a prerequisite for the paper, but an interest in Japanese culture and/or global history makes for a very positive learning experience.