

## Introduction to Modern Japanese History 2 and Studying at Rikkyo

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My name is Hali Power. I am currently a third year student from Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. I am attending Rikkyo University as an exchange student for one year and am enrolled in three English based courses this semester here. But today I will speak about one: Modern Japanese History. For me this class resembles the history classes I have taken in my home university. That is to say, there is a lot of reading and not so many tests or homework assignments. For me this is normal. However, I have heard from Japanese students that the amount of reading we are given is somewhat overwhelming. But for anyone who has taken a course based on Western style classes, especially a history course, it is no more than normal. As my major is Asian Studies and my minor is history at my home university, I find this course very interesting. It covers the main points of interest from the Tokugawa period as well as interesting tidbits along the way. Professor, Burtscher also has a very obvious, deep interest in Japanese history which makes his classes easier to understand and more interesting in my opinion. Anyone who is interested in Japanese history should take this course.

As I said before, history is my

minor, so I have quite an interest in it. I have not taken a history course taught in Japanese before, but the history courses which I am attending at Rikkyo (all taught in English) do not differ from ones that I would take in Canada. That is to say, the format and the teaching style is very similar. The classes are lecture style, so there can be a lot of information coming at you at one time. There is a lot of reading and, when they come about, in-depth reports. In my opinion and from what I have heard from Japanese students, these kinds of classes at Rikkyo will certainly be a challenge for those who do not have a high understanding of English. Where the readings are mostly translated from Japanese to English and where it is usually old texts, the language may be difficult to understand. Even I sometimes have a hard time figuring out what the author is saying. But overall this is a normal history class based on western standards, and if you like those kinds of classes then it should be enjoyable. I would highly recommend that you take a Japanese history course or at least a world history course before taking this class, since most of the material you are studying is read outside of the classroom. Having prior knowledge of at least basic history will really save you in this class.

The timeline can be confusing if you do not have basic knowledge of Japanese history. It is, however, an excellent class if you have a foundation of Asian history or any basic world history because during the time period covered in the course there were many interactions with other countries. Therefore your previous knowledge of other countries will aid in your understanding of the course material.

Overall, I really enjoy this class as well as all my classes at Rikkyo. The courses here, at least the Japanese ones, have more homework than I am used to. However it is nice to have a break from the long, sometimes twelve page reports that I am accustomed to. The Japanese style of learning is, in my opinion, heavily based on memorization. Therefore, being here is a challenge. My salvation from memorization is found in these western styled classes. They create a nice buffer for me to ease myself into a Japanese style of learning. Finding out new information about Japanese history is always interesting for me, and if you're a history nut, you are sure to enjoy this class as well.

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