Korea in the Age of Empires (1250–Present)

This seminar examines Korea’s historical relations with various imperial powers from the early modern period to the present. Korean states faced off the Mongol invasions in the 1250s, maintained largely peaceable, if delicate relations with the Ming and Qing empires in China from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, and balanced competing Western imperial powers, but succumbed to Japanese colonization after 1910. After Korea’s liberation in 1945, rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States led to Korea’s present division between North and South. What explains the differences and similarities between these epochs? How did Korean polities negotiate their political autonomy and cultural identity over this period? What informed the choices of individual Korean actors to resist, appropriate, or collaborate with empire? How do the legacies of this history inform North and South Korea in the international system of today?

This course will also interrogate the relationship between international relations and human agency, by thinking about “empire” not only as an imposition by a foreign powers, but also the institutions and ideologies of empire were employed by Korean actors. It will therefore also explore Korean use of the ideologies these empires espoused, such as Confucianism, Modernism, Nationalism, and Communism, in addition to how they were contested among Koreans themselves. It will therefore also pay particular attention to the perspectives of individuals whose lives were intertwined or impacted by these histories.

Fulfills History major and minor’s East/South Asia, research (R), and seminar requirements as well as counting as a Diplomatic History Concentration course.

Instructor: Sixiang Wang  
Moon Family Postdoctoral Fellow  
James Joo-Jin Kim Program in Korean Studies  
642 Williams Hall  
sixwang@sas.upenn.edu

Class Meetings: Mondays 3:30–6:30 PM  
Office Hours: TBD

Course Requirements

Students should expect 100–150 pages of reading a week. Class will be discussion based. Students will develop a research project throughout the semester, to be handed in as a final research paper. NO FINAL EXAM

Grading

- Active, informed discussion participation, including online postings (25%)
- Discussion leading (20%)
Korea in the Age of Empires
Hist 233 (cross-listed with EALC 141)

DRAFT: READINGS/REQUIREMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

- 3 Mini-quizzes (10%) Brief on-line quizzes
- Research paper proposal, with annotated bibliography (20%)
  - Topic to be developed in consultation with instructor.
- Final Research Paper (25%)
  - 15-25 pages, using a combination of secondary

Discussion

All students must read the “Required readings,” but only some students will be assigned “Additional readings” each week.

All students are expected to write a BRIEF (100–150 words) response to the “Required Readings” prior to class each week. All students will participate in discussion about these readings in class.

In addition, every week one (or a group of students) will be required to read the academic articles assigned in the “Additional Readings” and present in a succinct way the content and argument in these readings to the class. Presentations are to be brief oral explanations (5 to 10 minutes MAX) Powerpoints, slideshows, and handouts are therefore optional.

In these presentations, students should point out the major issues in the “Additional Readings.” Do the authors take different perspectives? What do they argue? What kind of evidence do they use? What is the information based on? What implications does the information presented in these readings have for our understanding of the themes discussed in class?

Final Research Project

The research project should make use of scholarly publications (published in peer-reviewed journals or books) and, if possible, primary source research. Students will be to explore major Korean studies (Korean Studies, Journal of Korean Studies, Korea Journal, Review of Korean Studies, Seoul Journal of Korean Studies etc.) and East Asian studies journals and bibliographical databases as they develop their project.

Reading Materials

Most course readings will be provided through Penn+Box, except those from the following texts, which students must acquire themselves.


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Course Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Frameworks and Questions</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Introduce the themes of the class: Korea’s place in empire, overview of the history of Korea, and approaches to questions of empire</td>
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REQUIRED READING


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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Pax Mongolica: Korea in the Mongol Empire (1250s–1350s)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Considers the period of Mongol domination in light of existing models of “empire” in sociology and international relations fields.</td>
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REQUIRED READING


ADDITIONAL READING


Week 3  Confucian Confrontations: “Traditional Interstate Relations” and the Tributary System

Addresses Korean relations with the Chinese Ming empire in terms of the “tributary system”

REQUIRED READINGS:


ADDITIONAL READINGS:


Week 4  A New Center of Civilization: Korea and the Manchu Empire

Addresses Korean views of the world under Manchu Qing hegemony

REQUIRED READINGS:

Korea in the Age of Empires
Hist 233 (cross-listed with EALC 141)
DRAFT: READINGS/REQUIREMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
University by Ilchokak, 1990. (pp. ###)


[Primary Source] Sources of Korean Tradition V.2
TBD

ADDITIONAL READINGS:


Kim, Seonmin, “Ginseng and Border Trespassing between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea,” Late Imperial China 28, no. 1 (June 2007): 33 – iv.

Week 5 Imperialism in Korea’s Horizon 1800-1864

REQUIRED READINGS


[Primary Sources] Sources of Korean Tradition v.2

- An Chŏngbok
- Yi Hangno, “Sinify the Western Barbarians,” pp. 140–142
- Hwang Sayŏng, “An Appeal for Aid,” pp. 135–137

ADDITIONAL READING:

Evon, Gregory N. “Tobacco, God, and Books: The Perils of Barbarism in Eighteenth-Century
Korea in the Age of Empires
Hist 233 (cross-listed with EALC 141)
DRAFT: READINGS/REQUIREMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE


Week 6 Roads of Reform: (1864–1890)

REQUIRED READINGS

Eckert, Carter J. et. al., Korea, Old and New, pp. ###


Sources of Korean Tradition 2:

- Pak Chehyŏng, “Political Reforms of the Taewŏn’gun” pp. 216–220.
- Pak Chehyŏng, “Conflicts with the West,” pp. 222–226.

ADDITIONAL READINGS:


Week 7 International Rivalries, New Imperialism, and the Kabo Reforms (1890–1897)

Eckert, Korea: Old and New, ###


[Primary Sources] Yun, Ch’i-ho. Yun Chi-ho’s Diary. Seoul: National History Compilation
Korea in the Age of Empires
Hist 233 (cross-listed with EALC 141)
DRAFT: READINGS/REQUIREMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
Committee, 1973. (sections)


Sources of Korean Tradition v. 2:

ADDITIONAL READINGS:


Week 8 From Great Han Empire to Annexation (1897–1910)

Eckert, 231–253
[Primary Sources] Bird, Isabella L. Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the Recent Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country. New York; Chicago; Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898. (Sections)

Sources of Korean Tradition v.2

ADDITIONAL READINGS:
Korea in the Age of Empires  
Hist 233 (cross-listed with EALC 141) 

DRAFT: READINGS/REQUIREMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE


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Week 9  
The Colonial Period I: Independence Movements and Japanese Rule

Eckert, Korea Old and New, ###.


Sources of Korean Tradition 2:


Additional Reading:


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Week 10  
The Colonial Period II: Collaboration, Resistance, and the Pacific War

Eckert, Korea: Old and New, 276–326

Mark Caprio, pp. 145–170, 187–197


Eckert, Carter J. Offspring of Empire: The Koch’ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism,
Korea in the Age of Empires
Hist 233 (cross-listed with EALC 141)
DRAFT: READINGS/REQUIREMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE


Sources of Korean Tradition 2:

ADDITIONAL READINGS:


Week 11 Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Views

REQUIRED READINGS:

Caprio pp. 171–172, 198–212


[Primary]


ADDITIONAL READINGS:

Week 12

The North Korean Revolution and The Korean War

REQUIRED READING:


ADDITIONAL READING


Week 13

Development and Democracy under American Hegemony

REQUIRED READING:


[Primary] TBD

ADDITIONAL READING:


Week 14 Beyond Empire?: Globalization, Multilateralism and International Politics

REQUIRED READINGS:


ADDITIONAL READINGS:

