Modern Korea
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This course examines cultural, political, economic, and social history from the nineteenth century until today. Topics range from colonialism and colonial modernity, national division, Cold War politics and the Korean War to nation building and nationalism, economic and social development, South Korean democratization, North Korean culture and society, inter-Korean affairs, the nuclear issue and security, the Korean diaspora and the “Korea Wave.” Although we focus on Korea, discussions must also include other players in Korean affairs (i.e. the U.S., China, Japan and Russia). By contextualizing Korea in East Asia and the world, students will have a deeper understanding of the internal and external forces that have shaped Korea and the impact Korea has had on its neighbors and beyond.

Learning Outcomes

- Acquire a broad understanding of Korean historical developments and culture, as well as Korea’s influence on East Asia and the world
- Think critically about historical debates
- Improve analytical skills
- Critically read secondary sources
- Practice reading and analyzing primary sources

No prior knowledge of Korea is required.

Course Requirements
Midterm (30%): based on readings and lectures.
Final exam (30%): based on readings and lectures.
Two short quizzes (20%)
Class participation and attendance (20%)

Required Readings
A course pack will be available at the copy center, but they will also be provided to you in electronic files as PDFs. All readings should be completed by the end of the week.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week One: Introduction and Korea in the Nineteenth Century

1. Introductions; early modern Korea
2. Nation Building and Nationalism: Korea in the nineteenth century

Readings for the week:
Carpenter, “Koreans at Home,” The Cosmopolitan (Feb 1889)
Lee and de Bary, Sources of Korean Tradition (pp. 221-227; 235-244)
Week Two: Traditional East Asia
1. Colonial Encounters
2. Colonial Modernity
3. Korea under Japanese Rule
4. In-class Movie Clips: Military Train (1936); review for midterm exam.

Readings for the week:
Korea’s Place in the Sun (pp.148-186)
Sources of Korean Tradition (pp. 315-324;326-332)
Yi Sang, “Wings”
“Hair as a Social Issue 1920s”

Week Three: Twentieth Century East Asia
1. Midterm in first hour of class; Liberation and National Division
2. In class movie: Hurray for Freedom! (1946)
3. Cold War, Hot Korea
4. North Korea; “Miracle” on the Han? South Korean Economic Development

Readings for the week:
Korea’s Place in the Sun (pp. 237-298)
Soviet Occupation Statement (pp. 1-2)
Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku speeches
Pak Wanso, “She Knows, I Know, and Heaven Knows”

Week Four: East Asian Cultural Relations in the Twenty-First Century
1. South Korean Democratization and Dissent; in class movie: The Dwarf
2. North Korean Culture and Society
3. Korea Wave and Global Korean Culture; in class movie: Take Care of My Cat (2001)
4. Korea Transformed: Class field trip

Readings for the week:
Korea’s Place in the Sun (342-403)
Kim Chi Ha Readings
Chapters from Aquariums of Pyongyang
Norimitsu Onishi “Roll Over, Godzilla: Korea Rules”
Keith Howard, “Exploding Ballads: The Transformation of Korean Pop Music”
Watch as many episodes your stomach can endure of Winter Sonata [on YouTube]

Week Five: Review
1. Conclusions; review in class; final exam review.
2. Final Exam

Closing Ceremony