

Breaking down Borders: Korea

Updated March 04th, 2010

(Spring 2009, ASAMST 98/198 Section 9)

(2 Units Pass/No Pass)

Time: Tuesdays 6:00 – 8:00

Location: Wheeler 20

Faculty Advisor: Professor Elaine Kim

Course Coordinators: Leah Yi, Joseph Chang, Tori Bazz

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Course Description:

Even with the rush of new information now being made available on North Korea, much about the country is still shrouded in mystery. Yet, the country remains the subject of constant speculation by the rest of the world as North Korea continues to rely on foreign handouts to feed her people while simultaneously building intercontinental ballistic missiles, and, having probably tested a couple nuclear devices. The country also stands as one of the world's prime proliferators of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles to much of the rogue world. Some also allege that the country profits from the production and sales of illicit substances and fraudulent dollar bills. The country has also admitted to kidnapping citizens from foreign soil to aid in espionage programs and has harbored Japanese terrorists as well as blown up a South Korean airliner.

Why does the world continue to give aid to a regime, which by some accounts, systematically violates the rights of her citizens like none other on the planet? And with this in mind, what warranted George W. Bush to take North Korea off the list of states that sponsor terrorism and simultaneously give aid along with promises of more aid in the future?

This is the mystery that is North Korea. The country sits on the northern half of the Korean peninsula in the heart of prosperous Northeast Asia. Its people number some twenty-three million people. With a literacy rate higher than that of much of the developed world, including the United States, the country is also home to a populace that is seemingly suffering from perpetual malnutrition and starvation. Meanwhile, the southern half of the peninsula is occupied by another, rival Korean state that is home to a thriving, young democracy and an economy that by some measures ranks among the top dozen in the world.

It is a surprise then that much of the world allows North Korea to remain shrouded in obscurity, caring only to frame North Korea as some bizarre, freak state. This purpose of this class is to change this as North Korea will be carefully considered within the context of how North Korea relates to history and her neighboring states (and the United States of course). Note, the course will not go in detail about the human rights situation on the peninsula.

Topics will be covered chronologically and all students will be asked to give one presentation as part of a larger group on one of these topics. Discussion will be encouraged as the main mode of absorbing information in the course. Guest lecturers and documentaries may also be shown.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation (55%): Students will be responsible for the reading and subject material covered during absences. Please come to class on time and stay for its entirety and complete the in-class assignment.

Presentation (30%): Students will be required to give one 15 to 30 minute group presentation on an assigned topic during the semester with the assistance of student facilitators.

Response Papers (15%): There will be up to four or five one page short response papers, where students will be asked to give individual reactions regarding reading material and guest lecturers.

Course Materials: All reading material will be posted online whenever possible. A reader will also be made available.

Outline of the Course:

Topics will generally be covered sequentially, beginning with Korea as a Japanese colony, the Korean War, and, of course, the cold war fought by two superpowers on the world stage. After covering these events and the discussing the impact that each had on the North Korean regime, topics will take a look at contemporary North Korea in the context of these three traumatic events. Additionally, issues pertaining to ultimate reunification of the Korean peninsula, the ongoing six-party talks, and the North Korean economy in the twenty-first century will also be explored. It is highly recommended that students read the book *Korea's Place in the Sun* by Bruce Cumings. The two hour class will usually be divided into two one-hour segments with the first hour consisting of presentation and the second hour of discussion and interpretation.

Supplemental reading material will be posted online at: northkorea.blogspot.com

Note: Facilitators will often make reference to the recommended readings.

Week 1: Preliminaries, Introduction

Discussion of what is expected from students and what students should expect from student-facilitators.

Required Reading:

Agency, Central Intelligence. *The World Factbook*.

Week 2: Why Care About Korea?

(February 16th, 2010)

Presenter: Joseph Chang

Why care about Korea? Presentation will cover how the United States is stuck in a seemingly intractable situation, where the United States has a result of the legacy of the Cold War is committed to fighting a war that, it would rather avoid. The direct implications of this will be covered as well as foreign policy failures on the part of the United States with respect to North Korea.

South Korea (1997-Present)

Contemporary trends in the Korean peninsula will also be covered. South Korea has come a long way in the past thirteen years or so, or since the country was forced to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund in 1997. Topics covered will include how South Korea is still a rather young democracy, a legacy of Japanese rule, and military dictatorships can be seen to explain contemporary events on the Korean peninsula. In particular, the first decade of the 21st century covered South Korea's middle class flirtation with very left-wing governments that were in most part a response to more than half a century of military rule that led to economic development that favored certain regions over others, wide scale civil rights abuses, and harsh repression of labor unions. This described as the "appeal of former South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun" will be described at length.

North Korea (1995-Present)

What is a Rogue State and Why is North Korea one of them?*

This period for North Korea was marked by famine – North Korea experienced a devastating famine in the mid 1990s that has led to marked changes in the way that North Korea is seen by the rest of the world, North Koreans see North Korea, and its effects have yet to play out.

Recommended Reading: Mazarr, Michael J. "The Long Road to Pyongyang." *Foreign Affairs* September/October 2007.

Albright, Madeleine. *Madam Secretary: A Memoir*. New York: Hyperion, 2003.

Mazarr, Michael J. "The Long Road to Pyongyang." *Foreign Affairs* September/October 2007.
Woodward, Bob. *Bush at War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.

Week 3: Why History Matters (2333 BCE to 1876 CE)

(February 23rd, 2010)

Presenters: Leah Yi, Tori Bazz

Presentation: Why History Matters

We will cover the mythical beginnings of Korea (Tangun 2333 C.E.) up until the end of the last unified Korean state (1910). We will try to answer if Koreans actually do desire eventual unification and, if so, why, and how strongly from a historical perspective. Strong emphasis will be placed on the Korean identity that has been forged over a millennia of having unified borders with no ethnic minority group.

Required Reading:

Pyong, Gap Min. "A Comparison of the Korean Minorities in China and Japan." *International Migration Review* 26.1 (1992): 4-21.

Week 4: The End of History (1876CE- 1945CE)

(March 2nd, 2010)

Presenters: Joseph Chang (1876-1905), Leah Yi & Tori Bazz (1905-1945)

In 1876, Korea signed its first modern treaty in the Westphalia context. This was followed by a domestic rebellion, which led to the first Sino-Japanese War (1894) at which Korea fully abandoned its tributary status or (dependency status) with China. This was signaled by elevating the Joseon dynasty into the Great Empire of the Han People, where empire denotes that the state is not a dependency state of China. This was quickly followed by the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), at which point Korea became a protectorate of Japan. From a historical perspective, it is incredible how so much changed for Koreans in such a compact period of time, especially in context of how Joseon Dynasty was the longest surviving dynasty in the history of East Asia (Joseon Dynasty 1392-1897).

The thirty-six year period of Japanese rule led to sharp fissures in Korean society and the Korean national psyche (often referred to as "Han"). Fissures came from the divide and rule tactics imposed by Japan and the separate and vastly different ideologies adopted by several Korean independence movements. For example, Koreans had to decide whether they wanted to raise a family and live ordinary lives by living as complacent subjects of the Japanese empire or to go overseas or join a guerilla army to battle against the Japanese. At the same time, for the first time in Korean history over thousands of years, millions of Koreans were uprooted from their homes as the industrial revolution firmly took hold in Korea. But, this revolution was unnatural in the process that it came under Japanese occupation.

Required Reading:

Korea Under Japanese Rule. U.S. Library of Congress – Country Study: South Korea. U.S. Govt. June 1990

<<http://www.loc.gov/>>.

Week 5: Eruption of Fissures: The Korean War as a Civil War (1945 – 1953), the Republic of Korea (1953-1997)

(March 9th, 2010)

Presenter: Joseph Chang

Presentation: Civil War

Fissures in Korean society were not able to be reconciled as the Korean (Civil) War became just a single battle and the opening shots of the larger, Cold War fought between the United States and the Soviet Union. National reconciliation never occurred and this had profound implications in the development of North Korea.

Presentation: Divergence in Institutions I (South Korea)

Why is it that the southern half of the Korean peninsula came to be a fairly wealthy, middle income country with democratic institutions? How did this process happen? After all, Korea was for thousands of years a centralized bureaucratic monarchy (and then ruled by centralized bureaucratic colonial government) with no history of democracy? The presentation will heavily emphasize the development of economic institutions first that began in the early seventies. Policies conducive to sustained economic growth over the long run that took advantage of favorable endowments unique to South Korea (access to the U.S. market, U.S. oil regime) led to prosperity in the South. Democratic institutions also took hold, but took much longer with South Korea holding her first free and fair elections in 1987).

Required Reading:

The Role of Foreign Aid in Development: South Korea and the Philippines. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, 1997.

(Recommended):

[Getting Interventions Right: How South Korea and Taiwan Grew Rich](#)

Dani Rodrik, Gene Grossman and Victor Norman

Economic Policy, Vol. 10, No. 20 (Apr., 1995), pp. 55-107

Political Dynamics. *U.S. Library of Congress – Country Study: South Korea*. U.S. Govt. June 1990

<<http://www.loc.gov/>>.

Song, Byung-Nak. *The Rise of the Korean Economy*.

(Heavily Recommended for this topic) Bruce Cumings *Korea's Place in the Sun*

Week 6: Divergence in Institutions Part (North Korea) (1953-1995)

(March 16th, 2010)

Presenters: Group 3

How did the Korean War effect the development of North Korean institutions? How does North Korea fit in historically into Korean history? Many of the peculiarities of the North Korean state have a historical rationale behind it. The notion of North Korea being a hermit nation began only after the Korean kingdom of Joseon was invaded by the Mongolians, Japanese, and then the Manchurians. In more modern times, of course, the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, and even the Korean War were also largely fought to answer the question of who would hold sway over the Korean peninsula. Xenophobia against even diplomats in Pyongyang also holds a historical precedent during the Joseon dynasty when Ming diplomats were not allowed to roam the streets without of a guide.

Required Reading:

Kim, Pan Suk. *Government and Politics*. U.S. Library of Congress – Country Study: North Korea. U.S. Govt. June 1990

<<http://www.loc.gov/>>.

(Heavily Recommended for this topic) Bruce Cumings Korea's Place in the Sun

Week 7: Famine

(March 30th, 2010)

Presenters: Group 4

Presentation: Famine in North Korea and its after effects.

Presentation will briefly go over why the famine occurred in the first place, but **emphasis** will be placed on how this has changed North Korean society permanently and how this can now be observed.

Required Reading:

Yooknok Chang, Stephen Haggard, and Marcus Noland. "Exit Polls: Refugee Assessments of North Korea's Transition." <<http://www.petersoninstitute.org/publications/wp/wp08-1.pdf>>.

(Recommended):

John Feffer, "North Korea and the Politics of Famine" (Silver City, NM and Washington, DC: Foreign Policy In Focus, September 18, 2006). (Part One only).

Week 8: DPRK Nuclear Program, Disarmament, and Six-Party Talks

(April 6th, 2010)

Presenters: Group 1

Week 9: Unification (1995-Future)

(April 13th, 2010)

Presentors: Group 2

Required Reading:

The Economist. "The Koreas: The odd couple." 2008.

Many branches of the United States government has published work stating that the Korean peninsula will be unified in some form within the short and medium term horizon. Yet, many in South Korea are against it. Why so? Reasons for and against immediate unification from the view of South Korea will be examined and discussed.

Required Reading:

Marcus Noland, Sherman Robinson, Li-Gang Liu. The Costs and Benefits of Korean Unification.

Week TBA: Why Should We Care About North Korea? (Current U.S. Foreign Policy to North Korea)

(April 20th, 2010)*

What is a Rogue State and Why is North Korea one of them?

Discussion of how U.S. foreign policy has shifted from fighting an ideological war against a communist superpower to regimes that were once held under the sway of the former Soviet Union, but no longer are. This presentation will cover why North Korea may want a nuclear weapon and what this would mean to the United States, Northeast Asia, and the larger world. Failure of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and its implications will also be discussed.

Required Reading:

The Economist. "The Koreas: The odd couple." 2008.

(Recommended):

John Feffer, "North Korea and the Politics of Famine" (Silver City, NM and Washington, DC: Foreign Policy In Focus, September 18, 2006). (Part Four only).

Albright, Madeleine. Madam Secretary: A Memoir. New York: Hyperion, 2003.

Mazarr, Michael J. "The Long Road to Pyongyang." Foreign Affairs September/October 2007.

Woodward, Bob. Bush at War. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.

*Subject to Change, depending on availability of guest lecturer

Week 11: Final Discussion, Guest Lecture*

(April 27th, 2010)*

Presenter: Assistant Professor Christine Hong from the University of California, Santa Cruz Literature Department

Topic: TBA

*Subject to change depending upon the availability of the guest lecturer.