HISTORY 392F: READINGS IN KOREAN HISTORY

Fall 2008, Wed 1:15–3:05
Classroom 200–202

Professor: Yumi Moon
Building 200 (Lane/History Corner), Office 228
Tel: (650) 723–2992
Email: ymoon@stanford.edu
Office Hours: T 1:00–3:00 p.m., and by appointment

Course Description

This course will examine seminal works and major debates in the historiography of Korea. The three basic questions found in those debates are: First, why did the Chosôn dynasty (1392–1910) last so long without any major rebellions, yet fail to reform itself and succumb to the Japanese colonization of the country? Korean historians have found the reasons in the dynasty’s differences from those of China and Japan and in its peculiar characteristics of kingship and social structure. Second, if the Chosôn dynasty did not succeed in reforming itself, how do you explain Korea’s transition to modernity? This question elicits the concept of “colonial modernity,” multifaceted yet inevitably connected to the “transformative” role of Japanese colonialism in Korea. Third, if Japan’s rule in Korea brought modernity to Korea, how do we understand its explosive collapse leading to the outbreak of the Korean War? Bruce Cuming’s monumental work provides an answer to this question, but many subjects about the transitional period between the late colonial period and the decolonization of Korea have not yet been explored.

Korean history in the United States has been developed through its contention with the nationalist narratives of Korean historians in Korea and its comparison with China and Japan. This comparative perspective is embedded in the historiography of Korea and has been challenged or revisited in most recent publications in Korean Studies. This course will discuss this comparative perspective in the assigned readings, as well as at their substance and findings, in order to look for a new paradigm in writing Korean history.

The course texts are available at the campus bookstore and will be on reserve in Green Library. Additional readings will be on the course website.

Requirements

1) Each week, one student will present brief comments and her or his questions for discussion on the assigned readings. These student presentations will be made at the beginning of class and should be 5 to 10 minutes long and no longer. Students can select
the weeks for their presentations in accordance with their interests or schedules. The number of students in the class will determine how many times each student presents comments and questions throughout the course.

2) Students are required to write a 10-to 12-page critical essay on the themes of Korean historiography that are addressed in the course. Books other than the assigned readings should be consulted. The paper is due Friday, December 12, by midnight. Students can email their papers to the instructor.

Week 1 (Sept. 24) Introduction to the Course

I. The Chosôn Period (1392–1910)

Week 2 (Oct. 1) Chosôn State and Society I


Week 3 (Oct. 8) Chosôn State and Society II


**II. The Nineteenth Century**

**Week 4 (Oct. 15) The Opening of Korea**


**Week 5 (Oct. 22) Reform and Rebellion**


**III. Colonial Period and After (1905–1945)**

**Week 6 (Oct. 29) Colonization**


Week 7 (Nov. 5) Nationalism


Week 8 (Nov. 12) Colonial Period I—Economy


Week 9 (Nov. 19) Colonial Period II—Politics, Gender, and Culture


Thanksgiving Recess

Week 10 (Dec. 3) The Korean War and Democratization of South Korea (1945– )

