



# History of Modern Korea

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## SHORT COURSE DESCRIPTION

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This course provides an introductory overview of the history of modern Korea from a **comparative and global perspective** as opposed to Eurocentric, Sinocentric, and Korean nationalist standpoints. We will consider answers to essential questions through lectures and discussions:

- Why is Korea interesting? What is “history”? What is “modern” “Korea”?
- How did Korea become a modern nation-state? Why and how was Korea colonized?
- How was Korea divided? What are the origins of the Korean War?
- What made South Korea a democracy while North Korea remains in a dictatorship?
- How did South Korea make an “economic miracle”?
- What is the source of vibrant Korean culture?
- Is the Korean Wave (*hallyu*) a recent phenomenon or deeply rooted in Korean history?
- What is the North Korean nuclear issue? What are the prospects for Korean reunification?

This course is divided into four parts in chronological order:

- I. *THE FORMATION OF KOREA'S MODERN CAPITAL-NATION-STATE*  
From the early modern era to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century
- II. *KOREA IN THE VORTEX OF IMPERIALISM & COLONIALISM*  
From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century
- III. *TWO KOREAS DURING THE GLOBAL COLD WAR*  
From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- IV. *KOREA AT A CROSSROADS TODAY*

The history of modern Korea is one of the greatest dramas ever unfolded in world history. It is incredibly fascinating and deeply poignant. No previous knowledge of Korean history is required, so anyone interested in Korea is welcome to join our class!

## READING MATERIALS

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There is no required textbook in this short course. But, there are some readings (articles or book chapters) students should read before class. All the required readings will be made available in pdf files before the start of the ISS. Here are some recommended books if you're interested in Korean history. My lectures are largely based on these recommended books.

- Seth, Michael. 2020. *Korea: A Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Hwang, Kyung Moon. 2022. *A History of Korea*. Palgrave. Bloomsbury.
- Cumings, Bruce. 1997. *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. W.W. Norton.
- Shin, Michael (ed.). 2014. *Korean History in Maps*. Cambridge University Press.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

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All ISS classes are pass/fail based on the student academic achievement evaluated by grades on a scale of 100 points (grade of 60 or above is Pass). The final grade is based on the following requirements:

### **1) Attendance and Participation (20%)**

Classes are based on both lectures and discussions. Therefore, regularly participating in class meetings during this short summer semester is vital. Students are highly encouraged to ask and answer questions and to make any comments on issues covered in class. Attendance will be taken for each class. Students may earn credit for their attendance at each class, while repeated and unexcused absences will cause a deduction in the student's total grade. I will post a pdf file of all the ppt lecture slides at the end of week on i-Campus, SKKU's online course page.

SKKU regulations require students to attend at least 80% of all classes.

### **2) Three Take-Home Quizzes (10% for each quiz and a total of 30%)**

A quiz consists of five short questions on significant historical events and essential theories discussed in lectures and class meetings. The quizzes' purpose is to ensure that students review the critical subject matters and materials (the ppt slides and lecture notes). There will be no surprise, meaning that all the quiz questions are straightforward, and not hard to answer. As long as you attend class classes, you will have no problem. Your answer to each question would be around three sentences. A list of weekly quizzes is given at the end of Thursday's class, and you will email me or post your answers on i-Campus by Monday noon.

### **3) Short Paper (30%) by Tuesday noon on July 23**

Students should choose one historically relevant event or issue in the history of modern Korea and write an analytical paper. The length of the paper is around four or five double-spaced pages. Your paper should be based on the following structure: 1) an introduction, 2) the relevance of the event, 3) a summary of the event, 4) competing explanations, 5) **your thought and reflection** on the existing theories and implications, and 6) a conclusion. You should research your topic and utilize at least three outside sources. I strongly encourage you to talk to me about this short paper project before you start your research. You need to email me or post your paper on i-Campus by Monday noon on July 18. The format and guide of the paper will be discussed in class.

### **4) Final In-class Exam (20%) on Wednesday, July 24**

The exam constitutes two parts. The first part is a set of "identification" questions that ask about essential concepts, theories, historical events, and proper names; students should identify what they are in one or two sentences. The second part is a set of short essay questions that ask to explain some significant historical events and competing theories; students' answers should be within five sentences. A list of exam questions will be given a few days before the exam, so as long as you prepare for the test, you will have no problem answering them. As the weekly quizzes, the purpose of the final exam is to ensure students review what they have learned in this course. 30 minutes are enough to complete the test.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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### WEEK 1. THE FORMATION OF KOREA'S MODERN CAPITAL-NATION-STATE

Monday (July 1) *What Is "Korea"?*

- Hyung Il Pai (2000). "The Formation of Korean Identity." In *Constructing "Korean" Origins*.
- Kyung-moon Hwang (2022) "Epilogue: Historical Reckoning in the Two Koreas." In *A History of Korea*.

Tuesday (July 2) *Global Modernity and the Importance of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

- E. H. Carr (1961). "The Historian and His Facts." In *What Is History?*
- Benedict Ander (1983). "Introduction." In *Imagined Communities*.

Wednesday (July 3) *Struggle for Reform during the Late Joseon Era*

Thursday (July 4) *From Dynasty to the Nation-State: The Break-Up of Joseon*

### WEEK 2. KOREA IN THE VORTEX OF IMPERIALISM & COLONIALISM

Monday (July 8) *The Japanese Colony and National Liberation Movements*

- The first quiz on week 1's materials by Monday noon

Tuesday (July 9) *How Was Korea Divided?*

Wednesday (July 10) *The Korean War: Its Origins and Consequences*

- Huruiki Wada (2013). "The Korean War: Its Origins and Legacy." In *The Korean War: An International History*.

Thursday (July 11) *Korea under the Cold War and Global Power Politics*

### WEEK 3. TWO KOREAS DURING THE GLOBAL COLD WAR

Monday (July 15) *North Korea during the Cold War*

- The second quiz on week 2's materials by Monday noon

Tuesday (July 16) *South Korea during the Cold War*

Wednesday (July 17) *Détente and Globalization*

Thursday (July 18) *"Miracle" in South Korea and "Disaster" in North Korea*

- Meredith Woo (2021) "The Developmental State." In JeongHun Han et al. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of South Korean Politics*.

- Wonik Kim (2009) “Rethinking Colonialism and the Origins of the Developmental State in East Asia.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 39(3):382-399.

#### WEEK 4. KOREA AT A CROSSROADS TODAY

Monday (July 22)      *Democracy in the South and Dictatorship in the North*

- Sunhyuk Kim (2002). “Civil Society and Democratization.” In Charles K. Armstrong (ed.), *Korean Society: Civil Society, Democracy, and the State*.
- The third quiz on week 3’s materials by Monday noon

Tuesday (July 23)      *Neoliberalization and the Ongoing Nuclear Crises*

- Han Kang (2017) “While the U.S. Talks of War, South Korea Shudders: There Is No War Scenario that Ends in Victory.” *New York Times*, Oct. 7.
- The paper is due on Tuesday.

Wednesday (July 24)      *Tentative Conclusion: Korea in the World, Today and Tomorrow*

- The final in-class exam (30 minutes)