

History 375. North Korean History (Fall 2017, Tues. 4-6:50pm, Leavey B-3)

Instructor: Prof. Kyung Moon Hwang (Dept. of History, USC)

Office hours: Tuesday 3-4, Thursday 11am-noon, and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

North Korea remains entrenched in the headlines, for all the wrong reasons, but little of the public attention to North Korea tries to understand events through the country's history. This course will do just that. We will begin our inquiry by considering the early 20th century, when Korea was ruled by Japan, and then track the development of North Korea as a distinctive country from 1945 to the most recent years. In addition to investigating the historical forces that shaped North Korea, we will consider how daily life in the country developed in accordance with the larger political, geopolitical, and economic changes. Finally, we will examine the construction and perception of history within North Korea.

Students will be required to do all of the readings listed in the semester plan (below) ahead of each class session, then come to class ready to engage in constructive, considerate, and active discussion of the study questions, provided ahead of time for each session, and of other issues.

Course Texts (most are available for free in e-book format through HOMER*):

Barbara Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea* (Spiegel & Grau, 2009).

*Chol-hwan Kang, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang—Ten Years in a North Korean Gulag* (Basic Books, 2001). <https://library.usc.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=4499133{CKEY}>

*Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Cornell U. Press, 2013). <https://library.usc.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=4619475{CKEY}>

*Andrei Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956* (U. Hawaii, 2005). <https://library.usc.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=4469007{CKEY}>

Hazel Smith, *North Korea: Markets and Military Rule* (Cambridge UP, 2015).

*Chris Springer, *North Korea Caught in Time—Images of War and Reconstruction* (Garnet, 2009). <https://library.usc.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=4447295{CKEY}>

Written Assignments

Each student will also write one of two short weekly commentaries, due Tuesdays at 3pm through our Blackboard site, in alternating weeks:

- (1) A two-page analysis (about 500 words) of that week's readings, which answers one of the discussion questions and shows how the readings illuminate the theme for that class session.
- (2) A one-page proposal (two paragraphs) for a discussion question for class, based on the readings, along with a reasoning of why this issue or problem is of particular interest to you.

In addition, you must submit the following two writing assignments:

1. A 1500-word (about 5 pages) analysis of the historiography, or published historical studies, on a given theme (in consultation with the instructor). Due before class session in Week 10.

2. An 1800-word (about 6 pages) Wikipedia entry on a very specific topic (person or event, for example). The first draft will be due in November, the final draft in early December.

All papers, including weekly commentaries, must include a paper title that reflects your particular argument or interpretive point in the paper. You will also need to follow specific formatting guidelines: double-spaced, 12-pt. Times font, 1-inch margins.

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Discussion participation, including attendance: 25%

Weekly commentary: 35%

Historiography paper: 15%

Wikipedia article: 25% (first draft: 10%; final draft: 15%)

**An Incomplete (IN) can be granted only in case of documented illness or emergency that occurred after the 12th week of the semester. The work must thereafter be submitted within one year of the date of the assignment.

How to Get the Most Out of This Course

The best way to succeed in this course is to do the readings carefully in advance, attend ALL of the class sessions, and to conduct a regular review exercise. Come to class ready to participate in discussion and raise questions. And take advantage of the human resources--professor, tutoring and counseling services, the writing center--to ensure that you are keeping up satisfactorily. Finally, step back occasionally to think of all the information in light of the larger historical patterns and themes. This will improve not only your performance but the value of what you gain from this course, which ultimately is to understand the scope, scale, and meaning of North Korea's history in the context of modern Korean history as a whole.

A Note on Integrity, Academic and Otherwise

Please make sure to observe common courtesies in class and refrain from disruptive or distracting behavior. This includes non-class activities with your computers or phones, the engagement in which is obvious and disrespectful. No use of phones or computers will be allowed during class unless it is for classroom purposes (taking notes or reading class texts, for example). As for written assignments, any work not done by you is simply cheating, and any unattributed use of others' writing constitutes plagiarism. Please refer to the USC guidelines for academic integrity here: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tio.pdf>. Anyone who violates these rules will fail this course and could face severe punishment, including expulsion, from the university.

Disability Services

If you are requesting academic accommodations based on a disability, please register with [Disability Services and Programs](#) (DSP) in order to obtain a letter of verification for approved accommodations. Please provide me with that letter as soon as possible. DSP (740-0776) is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 to 5:00 on the weekdays.

Semester Plan

Week 1. Introduction to North Korea and the Course

8/22. Introduction to the Course: Expectations, Goals, and Procedures

8/24. Oh & Hassig, “Looking Backward,” in Oh & Hassig, *North Korea through the Looking Glass* (2000), Chapter 1. [BB]

Andrei Lankov, “Change is in the Air in North Korea.” (2014) [BB]

Part I. Colonial Origins

Week 2 (8/29). Japanese Colonial Period (1910-1945)

Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea*, Chapters 17-19 [BB]

Kyung Moon Hwang, *Rationalizing Korea: The Rise of the Modern State, 1894-1945*, Chapter 4 (“State and Economy: Developmentalism”) [[EBook](#) through HOMER]

Paek Namun, “A Theory on the Present Stage of the Korean Economy” (1937), in Hanscom et al, ed., *Imperatives of Culture* (2013), pp. 114-31. [[EBook](#) through HOMER]

Week 3 (9/5). Impact of the Communist and Independence Movements of Colonial Period

Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution*, Introduction, Chapter 2

Dae-sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, Chapters 1-3 [BB]

Hongkoo Han, “Colonial Origins of Juche: The Minsaengdan Incident of the 1930s and the Birth of the North Korea-China Relationship,” in Suh, ed. *Origins of North Korea’s Juche*, pp. 33-36, 56-58 [BB]

Part II. Early North Korea

Week 4 (9/12). Immediate Post-Liberation Period

Hwang, *A History of Korea*, Chapter 20 [BB]

Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*, Chapter 2 [[EBook](#) in HOMER]

Andrei Lankov, “North Korea in 1945-48: The Soviet Occupation and the Birth of the State,” *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung--The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960* [BB]

Week 5 (9/19). A “North Korean Revolution”?

Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*, Introduction and Conclusion (pp. 1-12, 240-245). [[EBook](#) in HOMER]

Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution*, Chapters 3-4

Week 6 (9/26). The Korean War (1950-53)

Hwang, *A History of Korea*, Chapter 21 [BB]

Donald Clark, *Living Dangerously in Korea, 1900-1950*, Chapter 18 [BB]

Balazs Szalontai, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in North Korea," in Springer, *North Korea Caught in Time*

Sheila Jager, "Armistice, At Last," in *Brothers at War: The Unending Conflict in Korea* [BB]

Week 7 (10/3). Everyday Life in Early North Korea

Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life*, Chapters 5-6

Barbara Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea*, Author's Note, Chapters 1-3

Part III. Development of the North Korean System

Week 8 (10/10). The Turning Point That Wasn't To Be: 1956

Hwang, *A History of Korea*, Chapter 22

Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956*, Introduction, Chapter 8

Week 9 (10/17). The "Juche Speech" of 1955

Kim Il Sung, "On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work" (1955) [BB]

Brian Myers, "The Watershed That Wasn't: Re-Evaluating Kim Il Sung's 'Juche Speech' of 1955," *Acta Koreana* 9.1: 89-115. [BB]

Alzo David-West, "Marxism, Stalinism, and the Juche Speech of 1955: On the Theoretical De-Stalinization of North Korea," *The Review of Korean Studies* 10.3 (2007): 127-52 [BB]

Week 10 (10/24). The Solidification of the Kim-Centered System

Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea*, Chapter 9

Historiography paper due through Blackboard

Part IV. 1960s-90s

Week 11 (10/31). North Korea in the World

Don Oberdorfer, "Murder in the Demilitarized Zone," "Summit in Pyongyang," and "Engaging the United States," in *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, pp. 59-66, 335-47. [BB]

Andrei Lankov, "Enjoying a Very Unusual Life Indeed" [BB]

Hwang, *A History of Korea*, Chapter 25 [BB]

Week 12 (11/7). Politics, Society, and Life in the Late 20th Century

Cheehyung Harrison Kim, "North Korea's Vinalon City: Industrialism as Socialist Everyday Life," *positions: asia critique*, 22.3 (Fall 2014): 809-36. [BB]

Kwon & Chung, "North Korea's Partisan Family State," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 10 (2012)
[BB]

Kang Chol-hwan, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang—Ten Years in a North Korean Gulag*, Chapters
1, 4, 15-16

Part V. Despair, Survival, and Hope

Week 13 (11/14). The Famine of the 1990s

Kang, *Aquariums of Pyongyang*, Chapters 17-18

Demick, *Nothing to Envy*, Chapters 4-11

Goodkind & West, "The North Korean Famine and Its Demographic Impact," *Population and
Development Review*, 27.2 (2001), pp. 219-38 [BB]

Week 14 (11/21). Changes in the Early 21st Century

Hassig & Oh, "Economy of Everyday Life," *The Hidden People of North Korea*. Rowman &
Littlefield, 2009. [BB]

Changyong Choi, "'Everyday Politics' in North Korea," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72.3
(2013): 655-73. [BB]

First draft of Wikipedia article due

Week 15 (11/28). Opening and Closing of Possibilities

Demick, *Nothing to Envy*, Chapters 15-20, Epilogue

Andrei Lankov, "The Resurgence of a Market Economy in North Korea," Carnegie Moscow Ctr
(2016). [BB]

Bryan Harris, "[North Korea begins journey from feudalism to crony capitalism](#)," *Financial
Times*, June 21, 2017.

Sebastien Berger, "[North Korea quietly reforming economy but denies change](#)," *Asia Times*,
April 12, 2017.

December 7: **Final draft of Wikipedia article due**