

EAS333H1 Modernism and Colonial Korea

Fall Term 2016

Mon 2-4pm SS1070

Instructor: Prof. Janet Poole (University of Toronto)

From the avant-garde's explorations of the psychological terrain of the city to lyrical elegies to a nativist rural landscape, modernist writing flourished in 1930s Korea alongside the increasingly violent encroachments of industrial capital and the Japanese wartime assimilation policy. This course considers the problem of colonial modernism through a close reading of literary and other cultural texts from mid-20th century Korea. The aim is to rethink the problem of modernity through the example of a national literature that is rarely considered truly modern. The course will proceed on the presumption that interacting global and local conditions produce literary modernism in dynamically different, historically specific forms. Through intensive reading of works from 1930/40s Korea, we should all obtain an idea of the parameters of modern Korean literature and of the main issues involved in the discussion of modernity in Korea; we should also be able to use this detailed and specific knowledge to question the general problematic of modernity and modernism. We begin with tackling the concept of modernism and its contested understandings in Anglophone scholarship and writing on Korean literature. We look at the canonical texts of the Korean modernist tradition and follow the classic image of the man walking through the city streets. Then we open up the range of the modernist response to modernity, looking at questions of gender, time and tradition, the countryside, and finally wartime mobilization. Some of these questions may seem far from what we usually conceive to be "modernism," so we will be simultaneously questioning assumptions made about what it means to be modern, using the Korean historical experience as our guide. We will ask what it means to enter modernity under colonial rule, and explore the relationship between imperialism, writing and subjectivity. Readings of literary works will be accompanied by showings of paintings and photographs from the period, as well as discussion of theoretical essays on modernism and historical work on 1930s Korea.

Course requirements and grades

The main requirement for the course is that you do each week's reading in advance and come to class ready to discuss ideas, ask questions and offer up your own readings of the materials. This is not a lecture course! There will be regular discussions both as a class and in small group formats, for which you will need to be fully prepared in order to make the most of this course.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

1. 7 postings to Blackboard in advance of class (posting must address that week's reading and some of the questions on the syllabus. You choose which week to post). Each posting is worth 4%. 2% bonus available for excellence! Total: 30%.
2. There will be two papers (specific instructions will be given in class):
 - a. Paper #1 (4-5 pages) due in class on October 17th is worth 20%
 - b. Paper #2 (7-8 pages) due on Blackboard on December 9th is worth 30%

3. Class participation will comprise 20%. In order to participate you need to be fully present; more than one absence during the semester will result in a lower class participation grade.

For dates and deadlines, please see the class schedule. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Academic Integrity

What do the items on the following list have in common?

- Copying words verbatim from a book, website, magazine etc without a full citation and quotation marks
- Copying the ideas from a book, magazine, lecture or even a conversation without a citation acknowledging their source; in other words, representing someone else's ideas as your own
- Copying ideas or translating from a non-English (e.g. Korean language) website without a citation
- Paying someone to write an assignment for you
- Having a "friend" help you write/edit your paper
- Having someone pretend to be you at an examination or quiz
- Submitting a paper to one class that you have already submitted to another class

All of these count as academic offences at UofT and I will refer all cases to the appropriate authority according to UofT's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you are not clear what plagiarism is or are worried that you may unwittingly plagiarise, please see the following link and/or come and talk to me: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible:

disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

Texts

The majority of readings will be posted to the course Blackboard website. The following required text has been ordered at the Bob Miller Bookroom, 180 Bloor Street West:

1. Yi T'aejun, *Eastern Sentiments*, trans. Janet Poole (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

WEEKLY SCHEDULE WITH EACH SESSION'S REQUIRED READING

Week 1: The Question of Korean Modernism (September 12)

Hand out syllabus. Discuss organization of course and key questions. Read poems.

- Chŏng Chiyong, "The Sea Strait" (1933)
- Kim Kirim, "The Butterfly and the Sea" (1939)

Week 2: What is Modernism? (September 19)

How can we begin to define modernism? What has modernism meant in Korea? What is the relationship between modernism and a changing urban environment?

Readings:

- David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990. Pp. 10-38.
- Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Trans. Edward A. Shils. In Donald N. Levine ed. *On Individuality and Social Forms*, 324-39. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971.
- Christopher P. Hanscom, *The Real Modern: Literary Modernism and the Crisis of Representation in Colonial Korea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard East-West Center, 2013. Pp. 38-58

Week 3: Canonical Texts of Korean Modernism/A Man in the City (September 26)

What stories were central to the story of modernism in colonial Korea and why? How did readers in the 1930s describe and discuss these stories?

Readings:

- Yi Sang, "Wings." Trans. Walter K. Lew and Youngju Ryu. In Bruce Fulton and Kwon Youngmin eds. *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*, 66-84. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Pak T'aewŏn, "The Barbershop Boy." Trans. Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton. In Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton eds. *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*, 161-71. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.
- Ch'oe Chaesŏ, "The Expansion and Deepening of Realism: On *Scenes by a Stream* and 'Wings'." Trans. Christopher P. Hanscom. In Christopher P. Hanscom, Walter K. Lew and Youngju Ryu eds. *Imperatives of Culture: Selected Essays on Korean History, Literature, and Society from the Japanese Colonial Era*, 165-80. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013.

Week 4: Gendering Korean modernism (October 3)

What gendered presumptions underpin the canonical narrative of Korean modernism? How else might the story of Korean modernism be told?

Readings:

- Yi T'aejun, "Crows." Trans. Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton. In Bruce Fulton and Kwon Youngmin eds. *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*, 23-34. New York: Columbia

University Press, 2005.

- Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi, "The Haunted House." Trans. Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton. In Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton selected and trans. *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*, 149-60. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.

October 10: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 5: The Melodrama of the Country and the City (October 17) + Paper #1 due

What visual strategies are used in the film to represent urban and rural space? How do these compare to the fiction we have read? What stories of modern life can the melodramatic mode tell?

- Film: Sweet Dream (Mimong), dir. Yang Chunam (1936)

Week 6: Antiquarianism and the Question of Tradition (October 24)

How does modernism create the old? What particular meanings might antiquarianism and tradition take on in the context of colonialism? Can they be forms of modernism? What is the difference between them?

Reading:

- Yi T'aejun, *Eastern Sentiments*. Trans. Janet Poole. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

Week 7: The Anecdotal Essay and Everyday Life (October 31)

What is the anecdotal essay and why was it so popular in 1930s Korea? With what strategies does the essay depict modern everyday life? Why is everyday life so important to modernism?

Reading:

- Yi T'aejun, *Eastern Sentiments*.

November 7: Fall break

Week 8: Contesting the Countryside (November 14)

In what different ways is the countryside imagined in late colonial fiction? What aesthetic strategies are used to depict rural space? What are the politics of imagining the countryside at this time?

Readings:

- Yi Hyosŏk, "When the Buckwheat Blooms." Trans. Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton. In Bruce Fulton and Kwon Youngmin eds. *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*, 86-94. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Kim Yujŏng, "Spring, spring." Trans. W. E. Skillend. In Chung Chong-wha ed. *Modern*

Korean Literature: An Anthology 1908-1965, 171-84. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1995.

- Kim Yujöng, "The Camellias." Trans. Chung Chong-wha. In *Modern Korean Literature*, 3-8.
- Viewing of paintings by Yi Insöng and contemporary amateur photography

Week 9: Modernist Poetry (November 21)

What did modernism mean for poetic form? How was poetry made new? How can we compare modernism in poetry with fiction or the anecdotal essay?

Readings:

- Kim Kirim, "Soliloquies of "Pierrot"—Fragmentary Notions on "Poésie." Trans. Walter K. Lew. In Christopher P. Hanscom, Walter K. Lew and Youngju Ryu eds. *Imperatives of Culture: Selected Essays on Korean History, Literature, and Society from the Japanese Colonial Era*, 154-64. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013.
- Selected poems by Chöng Chiyong, Yi Sang and Paek Sök

Week 10: Modernism and War I: Total Mobilization (November 28)

Is there a relationship between modernism and war? Does creative destruction relate to wartime destruction?

Readings:

- Ch'oe Chönghui, "Wild Chrysanthemums." (Unpublished manuscript translated by Sarah Frederick and Kyeong Hee Choi).
- Janet Poole, *When the Future Disappears: The Modernist Imagination in Late Colonial Korea*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. Pp. 149-200.

Week 11: Modernism and War II: The Mobilizing Power of Film (December 5)

What changing depictions of country and city do we see in the film? What spatial form does total mobilization take on?

- Film: *Angels in the Streets* (Chip ömnün ch'önsa), dir. Ch'oe Ingyu (1941)

Week 12: Review (December 7)

Final paper is due on December 9th. Please post to Blackboard.

The Sea Strait (1933) by Chǒng Chiyong

The horizon swells up to my eyebrows and peeks
Through a porthole round as though pierced by a mortar shell.

The sky settles down low
Nesting on the sea like a heavenly fowl.

Here in this procession of glimmering fish
I take up my spot, on my own!

Like a conch shell my ear rises above my manteau collar,
Blowing the horn of a blustery deserted isle.

The stillness of the strait at two a.m. dons a halo most majestic.
Let me shed the sorrowless tears of a little girl.

My youth, my fatherland!
How bright the port will be tomorrow!

My voyage at sea boils up like a love affair
and somewhere the midnight sun is about to bloom.

Asphalt (1934) by Kim Kirim

Over the *asphalt*
the setting May sun begins to doze and

beneath the leafless trees along the street
the afternoon does its handiwork.

When automobile kids scamper by
wearing silent wheels of rubber

your heart is
a seabed of gloom

your soul
a grey lawn where the shadows of tired clouds occasionally come to rest.

For the silent passersby who have come to hear the sighs of a wind dreaming of the sea
the small *asphalt* road
pretends to be an horizon.

(Trans. Samuel Perry and Janet Poole)