

ASIA 337:

A History of the Korean People in Modern Times

Donald Baker (University of British Columbia)

ASIA 337 will take you on a journey through the last four centuries of Korean history. You will first encounter Korea at a time when the Korean people lived in villages ruled by Confucian scholars and struggled to make a living from tilling the soil. You will then observe them suffering under decades of oppression by Japanese and Korean military officers. Finally, you will see them moving into the cities and towns of the present day, in which (in South Korea, anyway) a democratically-elected civilian government presides over an urban industrial and commercial economy. Your guides on this journey will be three required books (see below).

The assigned readings and the lectures will cover cultural, economic and political history, tracing the path Korea followed as the rural agricultural society of the 17th century changed into the urban industrialized nation we see in both north and south Korea in the early 21st century. However, both the readings and the lectures will also go beyond economic and political developments to examine the social and cultural changes that have accompanied them. Some of the important cultural and social developments we will talk about in class are changes in Korean Confucianism, Korea's early reactions to Western culture, the rise of ideologies such as nationalism, communism, and democracy, changes in the role and status of women, the transformation of tradition and of how Korean cultural identity is defined, and the transformation of the religious landscape of Korea.

For example, we will examine the social structure, political institutions, and dominant values of the Chosŏn dynasty in an attempt to determine how a government that was strong enough to survive for five centuries was so weak in the face of the Japanese challenge. Then we will study the impact of 35 years of Japanese colonial rule, joining the heated debates over whether Japanese rule helped or hindered economic development on the peninsula, and over who the "true" nationalists were during this period. We will also explore the reasons for the split between North and South, the first time Korea has been divided since the tenth century, as well as the consequences of that split. This will require a comparative study of South and North Korean political institutions and ideologies, economic development, and cultural developments.

Requirements and Expectations

Textbooks

The textbooks required for this course are:

Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea*

Ch'oe, Lee, and De Bary, *Sources of Korean Tradition*, volume two.

Hildi Kang, *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea*

Han Kang, *Human Acts* (This is a novel about the Kwangju massacre)

Grading:

Your final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Discussion Questions: 6 of them, worth 3 pts each	18 %
Mid-term examination	20%
term paper	25%
Final Exam	25%
Attendance and participation	12%

Attendance is important for this class. Attendance will be normally checked by asking you to answer a question or two. Once the drop-with-penalty has ended (on Sept. 19) I will try to ask those questions with something called Top Hat. It's much cheaper for you than the Iclicker. In fact, this term it's free for everyone this term at UBC. All you need is mobile device such as a smart phone, a tablet, or a laptop computer, and the student code for ASIA 200 this term. That code is:

As for the short discussion paper, you will **not** get credit if you give me that writing assignment even though you have not attended the class in which that topic was discussed. In other words, you will not get credit if you enter the classroom before the class, and then leave, or enter the classroom after the class is over to give me your reaction paper. You have to be in class for the discussion to gain credit for that assignment.

A word of warning: Don't use Wikipedia to prepare your discussion papers or for exams. I found some students in my history classes last year who memorized the definitions of terms from Wikipedia to use in the identification part of the exams. They were misled by Wikipedia and lost points for being incorrect and missing the historical significance of the terms they were asked to identify. It is much safer to use the assigned textbooks (look in the index!) and your lecture notes. In fact, if you memorize a Wikipedia entry and reproduce it on an exam, you will get a 0 for that part of the exam.

ASIA 337 is officially a lecture course. However, I assume that all of you, since you are UBC students, know how to read English. That means you can read the chapters in the textbooks. I don't need to go over that same information again in lectures. Instead, I will focus on helping you learn what to look for in those chapters, what questions they raise, how they answer those questions, and also how those chapters provide information you can use to answer questions not explicitly posed in the textbook.

You should read the appropriate chapters **before** the lectures dealing with material they cover so that you can discuss those chapters with me in class. I want our three hours a week together to be as much discussion as lecture. (To encourage you to contribute to the discussions, **I will include class participation as part of your final grade.** To encourage you to read the chapters before you come to class, I will sometimes begin a class meeting with a **short quiz** on the material in the chapter we will be discussing that day.) Once I have confirmed that you have learned what you are supposed to have learned from reading the assigned chapters, I will then provide you additional information and arguments (interpretations of history) to supplement and complement the readings as well as engage you in a discussion of Korea history for the time we are focusing on in that class.

Six times over the course of this term, I will ask you to bring to class a one or two-page answer to a discussion question listed on the lecture schedule for that class day. Where appropriate, I will expect you to refer to one or more of the documents in *Sources of Korean Tradition* if there are any relevant to that topic. You will need to turn in those short written assignments at the end of the lecture so that you will have them with you during class and can refer to them during the class discussion. Anyone who gives me their paper before the class begins and then

leaves, or shows up after the class is over to hand me their paper, or has their friend turn in the discussion paper for them, will get a 0 for that assignment.