

North Korea: Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader

Instructor: Dr. Benjamin Young

Course description:

Founded in 1948, North Korea, officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), inherited the Soviet model of governance. In 1950, North Korea's leader Kim Il Sung invaded South Korea in an attempt to reunify the Korean peninsula under the flag of the DPRK. An armistice was signed in 1953 but the Korean War never officially ended and this unending war deeply influenced the North Korean leadership's worldview for the foreseeable future. Due to their experiences fighting the Japanese colonialists in the 1930s and the Americans during the Korean War, the North Korean leadership developed an ideology based on fervent anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. Today, North Korea is seen as a pariah state with a nuclear weapons program. We will analyze the historical transformation of a country that has long been misunderstood by the U.S public and policymakers. This course will explore the history of North Korea and the future of unification and peace on the Korean peninsula. As an upper division course, this course also seeks to improve students' critical thinking skills. The goal of this course is to improve students' historical, political, cultural, and geographic understanding of North Korea.

Assignments:

Students' performance is evaluated on the basis of the following:

Class Participation/Attendance: 25% (includes group work, in-class activities, and occasional homework or quizzes)

Midterm Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Analysis paper and presentation: 25% (A short 3-4 page paper for undergrads and 5-6 page paper for grad students based on one of the day's readings that analyzes and ties together the readings. Students will also give a 8-10 minute presentation to the class based on their analysis of the readings. Students will be encouraged to look at contemporary news articles and items that pertain to their day's topic. The paper is due at the end of that class).

Required Readings:

Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (W.W Norton and Company, 2005)

Andrei Lankov, *North of the DMZ: Essays on Daily Life in North Korea* (McFarland and Company, Inc., and Publishers, 2007).

Throughout the semester, we will be reading additional materials that will either be located on the course webpage, emailed to the class, or found via Brockport's digital library. Students are expected to read the required materials before each scheduled class. Pop quizzes may occur if the instructor feels students are not completing the readings.

Attendance:

Since this is a short and intensive summer course, attendance at every class is required. If you miss a class due to an illness, accident, or death in the family, please let me know as soon as possible and provide a written excuse. If you miss more than 1 course without an excused absence, you may fail the course.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the tools used by historians in their field of study and how such tools carry over to various disciplines and careers.
- Students will develop critical thinking skills that enable them to evaluate historical patterns and ruptures in North Korean politics, society, and ideology.
- Students will learn about North and South Korea and understand the differences and similarities between the two Koreas.
- Students will analyze the transformation North Korea from a “miracle on the Han” into an “economic basket case.”
- Students will learn about North Korea’s nuclear development and the dangers of the current crisis between the DPRK and the U.S.

Plagiarism:

Using someone else’s words as your own is a serious offense and may lead to expulsion from the university. If plagiarism is discovered, you will be given a zero on that assignment. Plagiarism can be avoided with proper citations. Please ask me if you have any questions regarding plagiarism or citing.

Disability Services:

If you require any assistance associated with a disability, please contact the university’s Office of Student Affairs and supply me with the appropriate documentation. I will make every effort to accommodate your needs.

Technology in the classroom:

I believe handwritten notes help students learn the material better and remember important concepts from class. However, although not recommended, you may use a laptop or tablet for note taking only. Please do not go on the Internet during class. There can be absolutely no cell phone use during class. Unless Donald Trump tweets about the start of a nuclear war with North Korea, please refrain from using social media in my class.

Session Plan:



Week 1

Mon, July 2 – Introductions and discussion of course themes; The Origins of the Korean nation

Homework due on this day: Read Cumings Preface and Chapter 1

Tues, July 3- Map quiz; The Opening of Korea

Homework due on this day: Prepare for Map quiz; Read Cumings Chapter 2

Wed, July 4- Happy 4th of July; Hooray America! No class

Thurs, July 5- Japanese colonialism

Homework due on this day: Read Cumings Chapter 3

Week 2

Mon, July 9- The North Korean Revolution, 1945-50

Homework due on this day: Read Cumings Chapter 4 (skimming is strongly advised for this chapter); AND read excerpts from Suzy Kim's *North Korean Revolution*; AND Read Anna Louise Strong, "In North Korea: First Eye-Witness Report,"

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/strong-anna-louise/1949/in-north-korea/index.htm>;

Tues, July 10- The Origins of the Korean War & the Cumings-Weathersby Historiographical Debate/Feud

Homework: Read Cumings Chapter Five; AND Read Kathryn Weathersby, "Soviet Aims In Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950: New Evidence From Russian

Archives” (link: <http://slantchev.ucsd.edu/courses/ps142j/documents/weathersby-soviet-aims-in-korea.pdf>), AND Read Cumings reply to Weathersby (link: <http://mailman.lbo-talk.org/1998-October/009787.html>)

Wed, July 11- The U.S Air Bombing Campaign During the Korean War and Its Lasting Effect on the North Korean Psyche

Homework: Read Mehdi Hasan, “Why Do North Koreans Hate Us? One Reason — They Remember the Korean War,” *The Intercept* (link:

<https://theintercept.com/2017/05/03/why-do-north-koreans-hate-us-one-reason-they-remember-the-korean-war/>); AND Charles Armstrong, “The Destruction and

Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (link: <https://apjpf.org/-Charles-K.-Armstrong/3460/article.html>);

Thurs, July 12- Review for Midterm

No homework

Week 3

Mon, July 16- MIDTERM EXAM

Homework: Study for midterm

Tues, July 17- The 1956 Purges and Kim Il Sung’s Power Consolidation,

Homework: Read Kim Il Sung, “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work” (1955) (link:

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/kim-il-sung/1955/12/28.htm>); AND Read pgs 2-50 of James Person, “‘We Need Help from Outside’: The North Korean Opposition Movement of 1956,” Wilson Center Working Paper #52

(<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/we-need-help-outside-the-north-korean-opposition-movement-1956>)

Wed, July 18: North Korea’s Social System and Surveillance State

Homework: Read Lankov Parts 4 and 10

Thurs, July 19: North Korea’s Defectors and Prison Camps;

Homework: Read Lankov Parts 11 and 17

Week 4

Mon, July 23- Tourism to the DPRK and Pyongyang as The Showcase Capital City

Homework: Read Lankov Part 5; AND Read Joan Robinson, “Korean Miracle,” *Monthly Review* vol. 16, no. 8 (January 1965),

https://archive.monthlyreview.org/index.php/mr/article/view/MR-016-09-1965-01_2

And watch North Korean travelogue video,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMoSyk0rK9s>

Tues, July 24- The Second Korean War and the 1968 Pueblo Incident

Homework due today: Read Mitch Lerner, “‘Mostly Propaganda in Nature:’ Kim Il Sung, the Juche Ideology, and the Second Korean War,” Wilson Center’s NKIDP Working Paper #3, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/mostly-propaganda-nature-kim-il-sung-the-juche-ideology-and-the-second-korean-war>

Wed, July 25- North Korea relations w/ the American Radical Left and the Third World, 1960s-70s

Homework: Read an article by your favorite summer professor, “Juche in the United States: The Black Panther Party’s Relations with North Korea, 1969-1971,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (<https://apjif.org/2015/13/12/Benjamin-Young/4303.html>); AND Read Brandon Gauthier, “North Korea’s American Allies: DPRK Public Diplomacy and the American-Korean Friendship and Information Center, 1971-1976,” NKIDP e-Dossier no. 18, (link: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/north-koreas-american-allies>)

Thurs, July 26- Daily Life in North Korea; Watch in class the documentary, “State of Mind.”

Homework: Read Lankov Part 6

Week 5

Mon, July 30- The Juche debate and North Korea as a far-right state

Homework: Read this interview with B.R Myers (link: <http://cherwell.org/2014/05/10/interview-north-korea-expert-brian-myers-2/>) AND B.R Myers, “North Korea’s Race Problem,” *Foreign Policy* (link: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/02/11/north-koreas-race-problem/>)

Wednesday, Aug. 1- The North Korean Famine and Nuclear Development; And Course Evaluations!

Homework: Read Lankov Part 18

Thursday, Aug. 2- FINAL EXAM (not cumulative) Homework: Study for Final Exam