

History of North Korea

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About the course

We examine the history of North Korea from its beginning in the postliberation period (1945) to the present, as North Korea undergoes monumental changes. One important frame is to place North Korea's history within world history. We begin with the question, *what is socialism?* We then proceed to looking at North Korea's history through themes such as "state-formation," "war-making," "ideology as state program," and "culture and art of socialism." Events and issues like the demise of state-socialism in the early 1990s and North Korea's nuclear program are also central to our understanding. Finally, the future of North Korea and East Asia is considered in terms of leadership transition, globalization, refugees and migrants, and the possibility of unification. **No prerequisites.**

How we run the class

Each week is a mixture of lecture and student-led presentations. Tuesdays are lectures and Thursdays are presentations. Most weeks have movies in class. We will also study images and music throughout the semester. Student-led presentations will be scheduled early in the semester. Presentations are a team effort, and each team is to present twice in the semester.

Requirements

- 1. Each person is to write 12 response papers** (out of 14) for full credit, due on Thursday before class, to be posted on Laulima. A response paper should be 500 words long and address the all readings of the week. One part of the response paper is a summary of the readings; the other is opinion and critical assessment, drawing from other sources and experiences. You cannot make up a reading response. However, please talk to me if university commitment or health situation prevents you from timely submission. I will accept late work under special circumstances.
- 2. We have 10 group presentations.** Each person participates twice. The presentations should introduce what the readings are trying to claim and raise questions for class (40-45 minutes total). The presentation, which covers all the readings for the week, is conveyed to the class in a multimedia format, using a presentation program (like PowerPoint).
- 3. There is a final paper at the end.** It is a **review paper of 10 pages** in length. A review paper is not a research paper but a paper that describes the various debates on a particular topic. The topic is to be chosen from the themes and readings from the course, with at least 10 sources. It is to be uploaded on Laulima.

Focus Designation: Writing Intensive (WI)

This course is a WI course. Writing is practiced to promote 1) critical thinking while learning and 2) interactions between you, me, and fellow classmates through in-class discussions, feedback from me, and feedbacks from me.

Student learning outcomes

1. Students can broadly explain historical change and continuity in the context of North Korea
2. Students can write expository prose and orally present their ideas using historical language and ideas.
3. Students can evaluate primary and secondary sources in relation to North Korea and modern East Asia.
4. Students can identify the main historiographical issues in the field of modern Korean history.

Class codes

Aside from presentation use, all computers are to be put away after 10 minutes the class starts. Critical discussion and collective thinking are essential to our aim. Regarding attendance, each is allowed one free absence. For all other absences, unless an absence is related to an official university event, each absence is counted, whether excused or not.

Evaluation and grading

Total 100 points: attendance 25 points (each absence 3 points); discussion, assignments, presentations 25 points; response papers 25 points (each paper 2 points), and final paper 25 points.

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| 99-100: A+ | 93-98: A | 90-92: A- | 88-89: B+ | 83-87: B | 80-82: B- | 78-79: C+ |
| 73-77: C | 70-72: C- | 68-69: D+ | 63-67: D | 60-62: D- | 59 & BELOW: F | |

Course materials

All course materials listed below will be available in pdf on Laulima.

W1. North Korea as state, nation, phenomenon. *Introduction of the course.*

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| Tue 8/21 | <i>What is your image of North Korea and socialism?</i> | |
| Thu 8/23 | <i>North Korea in the media</i> * Bring an example of North Korea in the media, e.g. news, art, blog, and videos. Movie in class. <i>Crossing the line</i> dir. Daniel Gordon / Nicholas Bonner; UK 2006. | |

W2. What is socialism? What is communism? *Before and after Marx.*

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| Tue 8/28 | <i>Socialism and utopia</i> Reading due. Michael Newman, “Ch. 1. Socialist traditions,” in <i>Socialism: a very short introduction</i> (Oxford 2005). Movie in class. <i>Crossing the line</i> continued. | |
| Thu 8/30 | <i>The pamphlet that launched a thousand ships</i> Reading due. Marx & Fredrick Engels, <i>Manifesto of the communist party</i> (1848). | Response paper 1 due Presentation 1 |

W3. Before the beginning. *From early 20th century to liberation, 1945.*

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| 9/4 Tue | <i>Early socialism in Korea</i> Reading due. Charles Armstrong, “Introduction,” “C1. Revolution on the margins,” The North Korean revolution, 1945-1950 (Cornell 2004). | |
| 9/6 Thu | <i>The rise of Kim Il Sung</i> Reading due. C. Harrison Kim, “Kim Il Sung (1912-1994): partisan from the edges of empire,” <i>Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism</i> (Palgrave 2016). | Response paper 2 due Presentation 2 |

W4. Socialism as program. *From factions to state-formation, 1945-1950.*

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| 9/11 Tue | <i>Revolution in North Korea</i> Reading due. Charles Armstrong, “C2. Liberation, occupation, and the emerging new order,” “C3. Remaking people,” <i>North Korean revolution, 1945-1950</i> (Cornell 2004). * Bring an example of a socialistic program in the US. Movie in class. <i>Order #027</i> directed by Ki Mo Jung and Eung Suk Kim; DPRK 1986. | |
| 9/13 Thu | <i>A new world, as seen by an American</i> Reading due. Anna-Louise Strong, <i>Inside North Korea: An eyewitness report</i> (1949). | Response paper 3 due Presentation 3 |

W5. War and possibilities. *The Korean War, 1950-1953.*

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| 9/18 Tue | <i>A civil war that became international</i> Reading due. Bruce Cumings, “Collision, 1948-1953,” <i>Korea’s place in the sun: a modern history</i> (W.W. Norton 1997). Movie in class. <i>Order #027</i> continued. | |
| 9/20 Thu | <i>The Korean War and America</i> Reading due. Steven Lee, “The Korean Armistice and the End of Peace: The US-UN Coalition and the Dynamics of War-Making in Korea, 1953-1976,” <i>Journal of Korean Studies</i> 18.2 (2013): 183-224. | Response paper 4 due Presentation 4 |

W6. Concentrating power. *Reconstruction and growth, the 50s and 60s.*

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|-------------|---|--|
| 9/25 Tue | <i>Industrialism as progress</i> Reading due. Cheehyung Harrison Kim, “North Korea’s Vinalon City: industrialism as socialist everyday life,” <i>Positions: Asia Critique</i> 23.2 (2014). Movie in class. <i>Dear Pyongyang</i> directed by Yang Yonghi; Japan 2006. | |
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| 9/27 Thu | <i>Postwar world in fiction</i> Reading due. Byong Hun Kim, "Fellow travellers," <i>Korean Short Stories</i> (Foreign Languages Publishing House 1986). | Response paper 5 due |
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W7. Critique of ideology I. *Is ideology real?*

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| 10/2 Tue | <i>Ordinary and extraordinary sides of ideology</i> Reading due. Terry Eagleton, "C1. What is ideology?" <i>Ideology: an introduction</i> (Verso 2007). Movie in class. <i>Dear Pyongyang</i> continued. | |
| 10/4 Thu | <i>The ideology of capitalism</i> Reading due. Slavoj Žižek, "Against Human Rights," <i>New Left Review</i> 34 (2005): 115-131. * Assignment. Bring an example of ideology that doesn't seem like ideology. | Response paper 6 due |
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W8. Critique of ideology II. *Ideology as state project.*

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| 10/9 Tue | <i>A brief history of North Korea's ideology</i> Reading due. Cheehyung Kim, "Total, thus broken: chuch'e sasang and North Korea's terrain of subjectivity," <i>The Journal of Korean Studies</i> 17.1 (2012): 69-96. Movie in class. <i>The Game of their lives</i> directed by Daniel Gordon; UK 2002. | |
| 10/11 Thu | <i>Ideology, in his own words...</i> Reading due. Kim Il Sung, "Socialist Construction," Selected writings (International Publishers 1971); AND Kim Il Sung, "On eliminating dogmatism and formalism and establishing Juche in ideological work. Speech to Party Propagandists and Agitators, Dec. 28, 1955," <i>Selected Works</i> , Vol. I (Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971). | Response paper 7 due |
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W9. The fall of state-socialism. *Hungry bodies.*

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| 10/16 Tue | <i>North Korea's hunger and famine in the late 1990s</i> Reading due. Marcus Noland, Sherman Robinson, and Tao Wang, "Famine in North Korea: Causes and Cures," <i>Economic Development and Cultural Change</i> 49.4 (2001): 741-767. Movie in class. <i>The Game of their lives</i> continued. | |
| 10/18 Thu | <i>Representing Suffering</i> Reading due. Sandra Fahy, "Famine Talk: Communication Styles and Socio-Political Awareness in 1990s North Korea," <i>Food, Culture, and Society</i> 15.4 (2012): 535-555. | Response paper 8 due |
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W10. Culture of repetition. *Art of North Korea.*

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| 10/23 Tue | <i>Culture as a revolutionary tool</i> Reading due. Charles Armstrong, "C6. Constructing culture," <i>The North Korean revolution, 1945-1950</i> (Cornell 2004). *Assignment. Bring an example of current human-created catastrophe. | |
| 10/25 Thu | <i>Art in production and exchange</i> Reading due. Immanuel Kim, "Snow Melts in Spring: Another Look at the North Korean Film Industry," <i>Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema</i> , DOI: 10.1080/17564905.2015.1035005 Visual study in class. Artworks of North Korea. | Response paper 9 due |
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W11. The nuclear program. *Early beginnings*

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| 10/30 Tue | <i>The origin of the nuclear bomb in Asia</i> Reading due. Stephen Kotkin and Charles K. Armstrong, "A socialist regional order in Northeast Asia after World War II," in C. Armstrong, Gilbert Rozman, Samuel S. Kim, and Stephen Kotkin eds., <i>Korea at the center: dynamics of regionalism in Northeast Asia</i> (M.E. Sharpe 2006). | |
| 11/1 Thu | <i>No class.</i> | Response paper 10 due |

W12. Nuclear weapons in South Korea. *The immanence of the bomb.*

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| 11/6 Tue | <i>Election Day. No class.</i> | |
| 11/8 Thu | <i>US involvement in nuclear North Korea</i> Reading due. Lyong Choi, "The first nuclear crisis in the Korean Peninsula, 1975-1976," <i>Cold War History</i> 14.1 (2014): 71-90. Movie in class. <i>Comrade Kim Goes Flying</i> directed by Kim Gwang Hun, Nicholas Bonner, and Anja Daelemans; North Korea, 2012. | Response paper 11 due Presentation 10 |

W13. What is to come? *Daily life and the Kim Dynasty.*

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| 11/13 Tue | <i>Daily life in North Korea today</i> Reading due. Changyong Choi, "'Everyday politics' in North Korea," <i>The Journal of Asian Studies</i> 72.3 (2013): 655-673. Movie in class. <i>Comrade Kim Goes Flying</i> continued. | |
| 11/15 Thu | <i>Dynastic power and unification</i> Reading due. Jae-Cheon Lim, "North Korea's Hereditary Succession Comparing Two Key Transitions in the DPRK," <i>Asian Survey</i> 52.3 (2012): 550-570. | Response paper 12 due |

W14. Thanksgiving break.

W15. Border-crossing. *The people who leave North Korea.*

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| 11/27 Tue | <i>Their long journey through church and money</i> Reading due. Ju Hui Judy Han, "Beyond safe haven: a critique of Christian custody of North Korean migrants in China, <i>Critical Asian Studies</i> 45.4 (2013): 533-560. Movie in class. <i>Dooman river</i> directed by Zhang Lu; France, South Korea 2010. | |
| 11/29 Thu | <i>North Korean Culture in South Korea</i> Reading due. Sunhee Koo, "Reconciling Nations and Citizenship: Meaning, Creativity, and the Performance of a North Korea Troupe in South Korea," <i>Journal of Asian Studies</i> 75.2 (2016): 387-409. | Response paper 13 due Presentation makeup |

W16. Is there a future for socialism/communism? *Socialism as a viable program.*

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| 12/4 Tue | <i>What socialism means now</i> Reading due. Slavoj Žižek, "How to Begin from the Beginning," <i>New Left Review</i> 57 (2009): 43-55. Movie in class. <i>Dooman river</i> continued. | Response paper 14 due |
| 12/6 Thu | Last day of class. Reflections on the semester. | |