**History of US-South Korea Relations**

Spring Semester, 2024 (March – June)

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Office Hours: Thursday, 14:00 – 16:00

Office: Bldg. 140-1, Room 302

Lecture Time: Wednesday, 14:00 – 18:00  
Location: Bldg. 140-1, Room 202  
Registration Quota: 25

**Description**:

This course examines the evolution of the US-South Korea relationship starting with the two nations’ first encounter in the late-nineteenth century and stretching to the present. Major issues that are covered include the colonization of Korea, the division of the Korean Peninsula, the Korean War, US assistance for South Korea’s economic development, US role in the democratization of South Korea, the South Korean role in the Vietnam War, and anti-American sentiment in South Korea. There are two overarching questions addressed throughout the course: 1) how did the United States impact the development of South Korea; and 2) how did South Korea as the junior partner in the relationship impact US policy? The objectives of the course are to both provide students with deeper knowledge about the history of the US-South Korean relationship, as well as familiarize students with the basics of diplomatic history.

Keywords: United States, South Korea, diplomatic history, democratization, economic development, alliance, Korean War

**Required Readings**:

* Park, Tae Gyun Park. *An Ally and Empire: Two Myths of South Korea-United States Relations, 1945-1980*. Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012.

Additional required readings are listed in the course schedule below, but Park Tae Gyun’s book will be referenced several times throughout the course. Readings that are from books or are difficult for students to find will be posted on ETL. Journal articles and other readings available via the SNU library website should be located and downloaded by students directly.

**Assignments**:

Presentation: Each student will give one presentation on one of the assigned readings during the course. The presentation should contain three parts. First, a concise summary of the reading including a review of the main research question(s), the main arguments/findings, and a review of the sources/data used in the reading. Second, students should provide a critique of the article: what was convincing, what was not, and why. Third, students should prepare discussion questions for the class at the end of the presentation. The purpose of the assignment is to train students to actively read by identifying the key aspects of books and papers as well as critically examine the academic works they read.

Report: Each student will write a 5,000 to 10,000 word paper on a topic of their choice that is related in some fashion to the history of US-South Korea relations. Students should develop a clear research question which can be answered by using archival sources. The paper should be structured as a journal article; in other words it should include an introduction that lays out the research question and the significance of the question, a literature review, subsequent sections that utilize primary sources to answer the question, and a conclusion. The objective of this assignment is to familiarize students with finding, analyzing, and writing about archival sources. Use Chicago Style footnotes for citations. Students will submit a paper proposal in week 7 (April 17) and the paper will be due in week 14 (June 5).

Final Exam: The final exam will be a take-home essay assignment conducted during the final week of the semester (June 12). A list of 5-6 questions will be provided and students will select three questions to answer. The exam is comprehensive in that the questions will be about material from the required readings and lectures from week 2 through week 14. Each answer will be no more than two pages long. Students will have 24 hours to submit their answers via email. The objective of the assignment is to test the student’s retention of information learned during the course.

Pre-Class Questions: Students should complete the assigned readings before class and submit at least two questions and/or critiques of the readings 24 hours prior to class via ETL. The purpose of the assignment assess students’ understanding of the required readings and to facilitate a lively discussion during class.

Class Participation: Students should make an effort to participate in discussions. To do so, students are expected to be in class. Excused absences cleared with the instructor (preferably beforehand) will not count against participation grades, but unexcused absences will. For an absence to be counted as excused, some sort of documentation (doctor’s note, etc.) should be provided when feasible.

**Grading**:

Presentation: 20%

Report: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

Pre-Class Questions: 10%

Class Participation: 10%

**Notice on Plagiarism**:

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. If plagiarism is suspected, the instructor will not hesitate to use online tools to check the originality of an assignment. Blatant, intentional plagiarism will result in an assignment being scored as “0.” If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, please ask the instructor.

**Semester Schedule**

(Week 1) Wednesday, March 6: Class Introduction and Historical Methodology

-Review Syllabus and Expectations

-Lecture on historical methodology to prepare students for final paper

-Questions: What are primary and secondary sources? Where can I find primary sources for diplomatic history?

-Additional Background Reading: Zachary M. Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), Chapters 5-8 (on ETL).

(Week 2) Wednesday, March 13: First Encounter and the Colonial Era

-Questions: How did the US and Korea initially perceive one another? How did the US respond to the Japanese decision to annex the Korean Peninsula? Did the US have a responsibility to help Korea avoid colonization?

-Required Reading: (1) John Chay, “The First Three Decades of American-Korean Relations, 1882-1910: Reassessments and Reflections,” in *U.S.-Korean Relations 1882-1982*, eds. Tae-Hwan Kwak, John Chay, Soon Sung Cho, and Shannon McCune (Seoul: Kyungnam University Press, 1982), 15-33; (2) Andrew C. Nahm, “U.S. Policy and the Japanese Annexation of Korea,” in *U.S.-Korean Relations 1882-1982*, eds. Tae-Hwan Kwak, John Chay, Soon Sung Cho, and Shannon McCune (Seoul: Kyungnam University Press, 1982), 34-53; (3) Homer B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (New York: Doubleday, 1906), 209-224.

-Additional Background Reading: Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), Chapter 3; Carter J. Eckert et al. (eds.), *Korea Old and New: A History* (Seoul: Ilchokak Publishers, 1990), Chapters 13-17; David P. Fields, *Foreign Friends: Syngman Rhee, American Exceptionalism, and the Division of Korea* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2019).

(Week 3) Wednesday, March 20: Liberation, Division, and the US Military Government

-Questions: Why was the Korean Peninsula divided? Why did the Korean Peninsula remain divided? How did the US govern South Korea?

-Required Reading: (1) Tae Gyun Park, *An Ally and Empire: Two Myths of South Korea-United States Relations, 1945-1980* (Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012), 31-62 (Chapter 1); (2) Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 1* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 351-381 (Chapter 10); (3) Jeong-Sim Yang, “The Jeju 4.3 Uprising and the United States: Remembering Responsibility for the Massacre,” *S/N Korean Humanities* 4, no. 2 (2018): 39-65.

-Additional Background Reading: Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), Chapter 4.

(Week 4) Wednesday, March 27: The US Intervention in the Korean War

-Questions: Why did the Korean War start? Why did the US decide to intervene in the Korean War? How did the Korean War impact US policy? Was the US responsible for the Korean War?

-Reading: (1) Tae Gyun Park, *An Ally and Empire: Two Myths of South Korea-United States Relations, 1945-1980* (Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012), 93-133 (Chapter 3); (2) Robert Jervis, “The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24, no. 4 (1980): 563-592.

-Additional Background Reading: William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Bruce Cummings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2010).

(Week 5) Wednesday, April 3: The Armistice System and Hub-and-Spokes System

-Questions: What are the armistice and hub-and-spokes systems and how do they continue to impact the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia region?

-Required Reading: (1) Tae Gyun Park, “The Korean Armistice System and the Origins of the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Incidents,” *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 24, no. 1 (2011): 115-136; (2) Steven Lee, “The Korean Armistice and the End of Peace: The US-UN Coalition and the Dynamics of War-Making in Korea, 1953-76,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013): 183-224; (3) Victor D. Cha, ‘“Rhee-straint’: The Origins of the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* 15, no. 1 (2011): 1-15.

-Additional Background Readings:

(Week 6) Wednesday, April 10: April Revolution and May 16: US Role

-Questions: How did the United States factor into the political turmoil in South Korea in 1960 and 1961? Did the United States have a responsibility to intervene in either case?

-Required Reading: (1) Steven Hugh Lee, “Development Without Democracy: The Political Economy of US-South Korea Relations, 1958-1961,” in *Tranformations in Twentieth Century Korea*, eds. Chang Yun-Shik and Steven Hugh Lee (New York: Routledge, 2017), 155-185 (Chapter 6); (2) Tae Gyun Park, *An Ally and Empire: Two Myths of South Korea-United States Relations, 1945-1980* (Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012), 149-235 (Chapter 4).

-Additional Background Readings: Yong-Sup Han, “The May Sixteenth Military Coup,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, eds. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), Chapter 1; Gregory Henderson, *Korea: Politics of the Vortex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

(Week 7) Wednesday, April 17: The US and South Korea’s Economic Development

-Questions: What strategies and factors led to South Korea’s rapid economic development? How did Korea’s relationship with the US facilitate rapid economic growth?

-Readings: (1) Gregg Brazinsky, “From Pupil to Model: South Korea and American Development Policy during the Early Park Chung Hee Era,” *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 1 (2005): 83-115; (2) Jim Glassman and Young-Jin Choi, “The *Chaebol* and the US Military-Industrial Complex: Cold War Geopolitical Economy and South Korean Industrialization,” *Environment and Planning* 46, no. 5 (2014): 1160-1180.

-Additional Background Readings: Byung-Kook Kim, “The Leviathan: Economic Bureaucracy under Park,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, eds. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), Chapter 7; Alice M. Amsden, *Asia’s Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

(Week 8) Wednesday, April 24: Normalization of Relations with Japan and the Vietnam War

-Questions: What was the role of the United States in the normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea? Why did South Korea send troops to Vietnam? Can South Korean troops be considered mercenaries?

-Required Readings: (1) Tae-Ryong Yoon, “Learning to Cooperate Not to Cooperate: Bargaining for the 1965 Korea-Japan Normalization,” *Asian Perspective* 32, no. 2 (2008): 59-91; (2) Victor D. Cha, “Bridging the Gap: The Strategic Context of the 1965 Korea-Japan Normalization Treaty,” *Korean Studies* 20 (1996): 123-160; (3) Tae Gyun Park, *An Ally and Empire: Two Myths of South Korea-United States Relations, 1945-1980* (Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012), 255-302 (Chapter 6)

-Additional Background Readings:

(Week 9) Wednesday, May 1: The Nixon Doctrine, Yushin Regime, and Human Rights Issue

-Questions: Why did South Korea fail to democratize in 1979 but succeed in 1987? Did the United States have a responsibility to pressure Park Chung Hee to democratize or halt human rights violations? How did South Korea respond to US pressure on human rights?

-Reading: (1) Tae Gyun Park, *An Ally and Empire: Two Myths of South Korea-United States Relations, 1945-1980* (Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012), 303-335 (Chapter 7); (2) Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 87-115 (Chapter 4); (3) Benjamin A. Engel, “For the Sake of Appearances: The Case of South Korean Authoritarian Image Management in the 1970s,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 21, no. 1 (2023): 143-170

-Additional Background Reading: Tae Yang Kwak, “The Nixon Doctrine and the Yusin Reforms: American Foreign Policy, the Vietnam War, and the Rise of Authoritarianism in Korea, 1968-1973,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 12 (Spring-Summer 2003): 33-57; Sohn, Hak-kyu, *Authoritarianism and Opposition in South Korea* (London: Routledge, 1989).

(Week 10) Wednesday, May 8: South Korea’s Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons and the US

-Questions: Why did Park Chung Hee begin developing nuclear weapons and why did he abandon the effort? Would South Korea be better off today with nuclear weapons?

-Readings: (1) Sung Gul Hong, “The Search for Deterrence: Park’s Nuclear Option,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, eds. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 483-510 (Chapter 17); (2) Benjamin A. Engel, “American Responses to Possible South Korean Nuclear Weapon Development: Then and Now,” *Journal of Peace and Unification* 13, no. 2 (2023): 53-78.

-Additional Background Reading:

(Week 11) Wednesday, May 15: The Gwangju Democracy Movement and 1987

-Questions: What was the US role in the repression of the Gwangju Democracy Movement and the success of the democratization movement in 1987? How did the South Korean government respond to US pressure?

-Readings: (1) William H. Gleysteen, Jr., *Massive Entanglement, Marginal Influence: Carter and Korea in Crisis* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 106-143 (Chapters 8 and 9); (2) Benjamin A. Engel, “The Search for a Tacit Agreement: U.S.-ROK Relations and Human Rights, 1972-1980 (Ph.D. diss., Seoul National University, 2022), 301-324; (3) Chae-Jin Lee, *Reagan Faces Korea: Alliance Politics and Quiet Diplomacy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 197-238 (Chapter 6).

-Additional Background Readings:

(Week 12) Wednesday, May 22: Anti-Americanism in South Korea

-Question: What led to the rise of anti-Americanism in South Korea? How has it impacted the US-South Korea alliance?

-Required Readings: (1) Hakjoon Kim, “A Brief History of U.S.-ROK Alliance and Anti-Americanism in South Korea,” Shorenstein APARC Stanford 31, no. 1 (2010); (2) Heon Joo Jung, “The Rise and Fall of Anti-American Sentiment in South Korea: Deconstructing Hegemonic Ideas and Threat Perception,” *Asian Survey* 50 (September/October 2010): 946-964.

-Additional Background Readings: Gi-Wook Shin, “South Korean Anti-Americanism: A Comparative Perspective,” *Asian Survey* 36 (August 1996): 787-803; Benjamin A. Engel, “Making Amends: U.S. Public Diplomacy Efforts in the late 1980s to Address the Gwangju Democracy Movement,” Working Paper.

(Week 13) Wednesday, May 29: Race and Gender in US-South Korea Relations

-Questions: How has the US-South Korea relationship and alliance impacted Koreans views of race? How has the permanent stationing of US troops in Korea impacted Korean society?

-Required Readings: (1) Nadia Y. Kim, *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 44-82 (Chapter 3); (2) Katharine H.S. Moon, *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 127-148 (Chapter 6).

-Additional Background Readings:

(Week 14) Wednesday, June 5: The Future of the Relationship and Alliance

Question: How strong is the US-South Korean alliance? Should South Korea actively participate in US efforts to contain China? What should be done about North Korean nuclear weapons?

Required Readings: Scott Snyder, *The United States-South Korea Alliance: Why It May Fail and Why It Must Not* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023).

-Additional Background Readings:

(Week 15) Wednesday, June 12: Final Exam