Course Description
Since the late nineteenth century, the Korean peninsula has, as Gregory Henderson once called it, served as a “vortex” of geopolitical rivalries that have left some of the most violent and alienating effects in modern history. Although the period of Japanese rule (1910-45), subsequent division (1945-48), and the “long” Korean War (1948-53) led to ethno-nationalist accounts emphasizing a collective sense of victimhood – often articulated under the rubric of han, or emotional suffering – Korea’s own position in the hot wars of the Asia-Pacific and beyond also hurled the southern half of the peninsula into what Jin-Kyung Lee has described as a “sub-empire.” Used by the north to assert its own program to promote what Suk-Young Kim has called an “illusive utopia,” this geo-political positioning produced equally violent reprisals against the capitalist bloc’s self-avowed enemies, such as North Vietnam. It also placed the country and its inhabitants in a dominant position vis-à-vis other regions, such as Southeast Asia, even as the US subordinated South Korea(ns) to its national, gendered, class, and racial interests.

This course will trace some of the most newly discussed analytics of the Cold War as they relate to “Korea,” such as race, sexuality, economy, militarization, diaspora, and adoption. We will extend our gaze beyond the geographical boundaries of the peninsula and its divided states to consider the ways in which post-colonial anti-communism/capitalism affected the lived realities of peoples whose fate was tied to the two Koreas. The class will thus serve as an intellectual forum for thinking about “Korea” – and, by extension, other regions – as transnational (and comparative) history. Through reading, writing, and speaking assignments (see “grading” below), class participants will be encouraged to push their thinking in these critical directions.

Grading
Attendance and active participation 22%
8 reaction papers (2-3 pages) and 1 in-class presentation (6% each) 48%
Final “think piece” (12-15 pages) 30%

Required Books


**Other readings are available on E-Reserves; please use the password “th214” to access them**

**Course Plan**

**Week 1 (Oct. 1) – Introduction and Framings**

* Distribute syllabus and explain course requirements*


**Week 2 (Oct. 8) – The Korean War and its Diasporic Aftereffects**


**Week 3 (Oct. 15) – Military Conduits (1): The US**

Week 4 (Oct. 22) – Military Conduits (2): The Philippines

Week 5 (Oct. 29) – Transnational and Transracial Adoption

**Dr. Kim will visit seminar to discuss book, followed by lunch together**
**Dr. Kim will also be offering a lecture on new research (environment and the DMZ) from 4:30 to 6:00 PM in HSS 2150, followed by dinner**

Week 6 (Nov. 5) – North Korean Cultures
Suk-Young Kim, Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010)

Week 7 (Nov. 12) – Post-Colonial/Cold War “Repatriations”
No Class (Veterans Day); Read and submit (via email) reaction paper by end of class time
Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Exodus to North Korea: Shadows from Japan's Cold War (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007)

Week 8 (Nov. 19) – South Korea as Sub-empire

Week 9 (Nov. 26) – Literary and Filmic Formations

Week 10 (Dec. 3) – Paper Projects
Final “think piece” proposal with annotated bibliography due for individual meetings

Exam Week
Submit final “think piece” at quarter-end party