

THE 31ST ANNUAL
HAHN MOO-SOOK COLLOQUIUM IN THE KOREAN HUMANITIES

COMPETING VOICES:
PROTESTS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN KOREA



Speaker

YOONKYUNG LEE

Professor of Sociology,
University of Toronto



Speaker

JU HUI JUDY HAN

Assistant Professor of
Gender Studies, UCLA



Speaker

JENNIFER JIHYE CHUN

Associate Professor of
Asian American Studies
and Labor Studies, UCLA



Speaker

NAN KIM

Associate Professor of
History and Faculty
Affiliate in Anthropology,
University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee



Date & Time

Friday, October 27, 2023

2:00 PM – 5:30 PM EDT

Location

Elliott School of International Affairs
George Washington University
1957 E ST NW, Washington, DC
Lindner Family Commons (Room 602)

Also Available Virtually Via Zoom

❖ EVENT DESCRIPTION

South Korea has a history of demonstrations and protests that continue in the democratic era. From student protests to labor strikes to more recent #MeToo demonstrations, waves of contentious politics have reshaped the political landscape and protest itself in Korea. They have popularized tactics like the candlelight demonstration and organizational forms, such as national solidarity infrastructures. At the same time, extreme protest tactics persist and depend on material and emotional support from activist communities. Korean contentious politics is also engaging with transnational advocacy and the Korean diaspora, including through counter-mobilization. And new issues and competing knowledge claims are spurring mobilization. This year's Hahn Moo-Sook Colloquium in the Korean Humanities will examine the competing voices and shifting practices of protest cultures in South Korea.

❖ PROGRAM SCHEDULE

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	CHECK-IN/LIGHT RECEPTION
2:00 PM - 2:20 PM	Welcoming & Congratulatory Remarks
2:20 PM - 3:30 PM	<p>Immanuel Kim (<i>Moderator</i>), Chair, Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures; Korea Foundation and Kim-Renaud Associate Professor of Korean Literature and Culture Studies at the George Washington University</p> <p>Paul Wahlbeck, Dean, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences at the George Washington University</p> <p>Nicholas Vonortas, Associate Dean for Research Initiatives, Elliott School of International Studies at the George Washington University</p> <p>Hoagy Kim, Chairman, Hahn Moo-Sook Foundation</p>
2:20 PM - 3:30 PM	<p style="text-align: center;">Session I</p> <p>“Democracy and Protest (and Labor) in Korea”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker: Yoonkyung Lee, Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto <p>“The Everyday Life of Protest: Care, Reflexivity and Solidarity”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker: Jennifer Jihye Chun, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies and Labor Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles <p>Discussant: Celeste Arrington, Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the George Washington University</p>
3:30 PM - 3:50 PM	Break

<p>3:50 PM – 5:10 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Session II</p> <p>“Queer Throughlines and Political Ties”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker: Ju Hui Judy Han, Assistant Professor of Gender Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles <p>“Contested Knowledge, Polarized Korea, and Transnational Controversy over the Long-Term Release of Fukushima’s Irradiated Wastewater into the Pacific Ocean”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker: Nan Kim, Associate Professor of History and Faculty Affiliate in Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee <p>Discussant: Sung Soo Hong, Professor of Law at Sookmyung Women’s University; Visiting Scholar at the George Washington University Institute for Korean Studies</p>
<p>5:10 PM – 5:30 PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">General Q&A and Closing Remarks</p>

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Welcoming & Congratulatory Remarks

Immanuel Kim (*Moderator*) | Chair, Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures; Korea Foundation and Kim-Renaud Associate Professor of Korean Literature and Culture Studies at the George Washington University



Immanuel Kim is Korea Foundation and Kim-Renaud Associate Professor of Korean Literature and Culture Studies in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. Prior to working at the George Washington University, he was Assistant Professor in the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies at Binghamton University (SUNY). His first book, *Rewriting Revolution: Women, Sexuality, and Memory in North Korean Fiction* (2018), examines North Korean literature, and his second book, *Laughing North Koreans* (2020), looks at North Korean comedy films. He also translated a novel from North Korea called *Friend* (2020).

Paul Wahlbeck | Dean, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences at the George Washington University



Paul Wahlbeck was named dean of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences in 2020, after serving as interim dean for two years. As the leader of the university’s largest academic unit, he remains committed to enhancing the student experience through investments in efforts to ensure student success and the development of innovative programs and expanded experiential learning opportunities. He also is focused on fostering a supportive environment for world-changing faculty research and building strong relationships with alumni.

Dean Wahlbeck came to Columbian College in 1993 as a faculty member in the Political Science Department after receiving his PhD from Washington University. As chair of the Political Science Department, beginning in 2011, he focused on strengthening student engagement with career and student research panels, making the political science doctoral program one of the strongest in the country and supporting faculty scholarship. As vice dean for programs and research from 2016 to 2018, he oversaw graduate enrollment, research growth and academic and student services.

Dean Wahlbeck's scholarship centers on Supreme Court decision making, especially strategic interaction among justices. His co-authored book, *Crafting Law on the Supreme Court: The Collegial Game*, was awarded the 2017 Lasting Contribution Award from the Law & Courts Section of the American Political Science Association. His work has been published in many noteworthy journals, including the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics* and *Political Research Quarterly*. A holder of a JD from the University of Illinois, he served as an attorney for the Illinois General Assembly and the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation earlier in his career. In addition, he served as director of the Law and Social Science Program at the National Science Foundation (NSF) from 2001 to 2003 and, in 2006, was named director of NSF's Political Science Program. He also holds a courtesy appointment in the GW School of Law.

Nicholas Vonortas | Associate Dean for Research Initiatives, Elliott School of International Studies at the George Washington University



As Associate Dean for research initiatives, Professor Vonortas oversees research centers and institutes homed at the Elliott School, and engages school- and GW-wide to promote and further faculty research. Professor Vonortas currently holds a 'São Paulo Excellence Chair' in Technology and Innovation Policy at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), State of São Paulo, Brazil. He is a Leading Research Fellow at the Institute for Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge, National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow, Russian Federation. He recently completed a Visiting Professorship at the

Schwarzman College, Tsinghua University, Republic of China. He has also served for several years as a member of the Innovation Policy Forum of the U.S. National Academies of Science.

His teaching and research interests are in industrial organization, in the economics of technological change, and in technology and innovation policy and strategy. He specializes on strategic partnerships/innovation networks, investment under uncertainty, technology transfer, knowledge-intensive entrepreneurship, and R&D program evaluation. He has published widely on these issues. Professor Vonortas has held visiting appointments at several universities including the Tsinghua University (China), University of Lund (Sweden), Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV) (Brazil), University of Campinas (Brazil), Korea University (Republic of Korea), National Research University Higher School of Economics (Russian Federation), the University of Maastricht (Netherlands), Luigi Bocconi University (Italy), and the Athens University of Economics and Business and the National Technical University of Athens (Greece). He has served as a consultant to many government agencies in the United States, the European Union and several member countries, Brazil, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, and Japan as well as to several international organizations such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United Nations. Professor Vonortas is editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Science and Public Policy* and holds a Ph.D. and M.Phil. in Economics from New York University (USA), a MA in Economic Development from Leicester University (UK), and a BA in Economics from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece).

Hoagy Kim | Chairman, Hahn Moo-Sook Foundation

Hoagy Kim is Director of the Hahn Moo-Sook House and Chairman of the Hahn Moo-Sook Foundation. He received a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from the Colorado School of Mines. He was the Secretary General of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Science and Technology (for President Roh Tae-woo); a charter faculty member of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology; the first President of the new Korean National Science Museum in Taedök; and the President of the R & D Management Center of Energy and Resources. He received the French National Order of Merit from President François Mitterrand.

Session I**Yoonkyung Lee** | Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto

Yoonkyung Lee is Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto and serves as the Director of the Centre for the Study of Korea in the same institution. She is a political sociologist specializing in labor politics, social movements, democracy, and the political economy of neoliberalism with a regional focus on East Asia. She is the author of two books, *Militants or Partisans: Labor Unions and Democratic Politics in Korea and Taiwan* (Stanford University Press 2011) and *Between the Streets and the Assembly: Social Movements, Political Parties, and Democracy in Korea* (University of Hawaii Press

2022), in addition to a number of journal articles and book chapters on labor movements and democratic politics. Her recent publications include “Cold War Undercurrents: The Extreme Right Variants in East Asian Democracies” in *Politics and Society* 49-3 (2021): 403-430 and “Neoliberal Methods of Labor Repression: Privatized Violence and Dispossession Litigation in Korea” in *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 51-1 (2021): 20-37 (winner of Journal of Contemporary Asia Best Article Prize in 2021).

“Democracy and Protest (and Labor) in Korea”

The advances and even setbacks of Korean democracy are unthinkable without protest movements. This talk surveys several waves of contentious politics in the streets that have shaped and altered the course of national politics by mobilizing citizens around transformative agendas. To understand these processes, Lee suggests the notion of national solidarity infrastructure through which various social movement organizations form coordination networks, professional experts engage in formulating policy alternatives, and activists innovate methods of mass street demonstrations. This is how the so-called “candlelight protest” has become a prominent mode of collective action since the early 2000s. However, this is not a full story of Korean protests as some distinctive variations are observed across different sectoral movements. Labor movements are the case in point as they have increasingly shown their reliance on extreme protest repertoires (defined as a form of protest that is lone in nature, accompanying a high level of self-imposed danger and pain without harming others, and staged for a collective cause). This talk discusses extreme protest repertoires as a manifestation of Korean workers’ precarity and repression experienced in their interactions with “democratic” state authorities and “world-leading” corporations. Democracy does not offer an equal ground to all collective actors and workers encounter the blunt consequences of a neoliberal economy and the failure of political redress.

Jennifer Jihye Chun | Associate Professor of Asian American Studies and Labor Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles



Jennifer Jihye Chun is Associate Professor of Asian American Studies and Labor Studies at the University of California Los Angeles. She is also chair of the International Development Studies program at the International Institute and Associate Director of the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at UCLA. She publishes and lectures widely on informal and precarious labor, union and community organizing, and gender, migration, and care work. She is the author of the award-winning book, *Organizing at the Margins: the Symbolic Politics of Labor in South Korea* (Cornell University Press), and recent articles in *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, *Political Power and Social Theory*, and *Critical Sociology*. Her talk draws on long-term ethnographic research conducted for her second book, *Against Abandonment: Refusal and Solidarity in South Korean Protest* (co-authored with Ju Hui Judy Han). Chun holds a B.A. from Dartmouth College, and an MA and PhD from the University of California Berkeley. She has held previous faculty positions in the Department of Sociology at The University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto.

“The Everyday Life of Protest: Care, Reflexivity and Solidarity”

Struggles against capitalist injustice and state violence are synonymous with struggles against disposability and abandonment in South Korea. Refusing to be discarded like the ubiquitous single-use disposable cup, protesting workers—as well as other aggrieved actors fighting against threats to their jobs, homes, bodies, and futures—have become embroiled in bitter disputes that last months and sometimes years with no end in sight. In this talk, I discuss the crucial role that activist communities play in supporting protesters who repeatedly engage in life-threatening acts as part of an agonistic protest repertoire. Social movement activists provide essential forms of physical, material, and emotional support that enable protesters to sustain dangerous hunger strikes, long-term protest camps, perilous high-altitude occupations, and grueling ritualized performances. They also cultivate internal organizational practices that enhance their collective capacity to care for and support one another in the context of debilitating crisis and failure. Building on the critical interventions of Black, indigenous, women of color, and queer scholars, I highlight three feminist principles that guide the life-giving labor of activist communities: collective care, movement reflexivity, and mutual solidarity. These feminist principles not only help to counter the top-down and instrumentalizing tendencies of social movement practices rooted in masculinist nationalist ideologies, but they also develop relational approaches to agonistic politics that emphasize means over ends and ground movement praxis in the regenerative political horizons of reciprocity, interdependency and sustainability.

Celeste Arrington (*Discussant*) | Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the George Washington University



Celeste Arrington is Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at GW. She specializes in comparative public policy, law and social change, lawyers, and governance, with a regional focus on the Koreas and Japan. She is also interested in Northeast Asian security, North Korean human rights, and transnational activism. Her first book was *Accidental Activists: Victim Movements and Governmental Accountability in Japan and South Korea* (Cornell, 2016). She has published numerous articles and, with Patricia Goedde, she co-edited *Rights Claiming in*

South Korea (Cambridge, 2021). Her current book project analyzes the legalistic turn in Korean and Japanese governance through paired case studies related to tobacco control and disability rights. She received a PhD from UC Berkeley, an MPhil from the University of Cambridge, and an AB from Princeton University. She is a core faculty of the GW Institute for Korean Studies (GWIKS) and president of the Association of Korean Political Studies. Her recent article “Knowledge production through legal mobilization: Environmental activism against the U.S. military bases in East Asia” with Claudia Kim won the Asian Law and Society Association's distinguished article award.

Session II

Ju Hui Judy Han | Cultural Geographer & Assistant Professor of Gender Studies, at the University of California, Los Angeles



Ju Hui Judy Han is a cultural geographer and Assistant Professor of Gender Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her comics and writings about (im)mobilities, religion, and queer politics have been published in *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Critical Asian Studies*, and *Journal of Korean Studies* as well as in several edited books including *Religion, Protest, Social Upheava** (2022), *Rights Claiming in South Korea* (2021), *Ethnographies of U.S. Empire* (2018), and *Territories of Poverty: Rethinking North and South* (2015). Her first book manuscript conceptualizes “queer throughlines” as rebellious lines that twist and meander, disrupting and redrawing relationalities. She is also working on a jointly authored book, “Against Abandonment: Refusal and Solidarity in South Korean Protest” with Jennifer Jihye Chun.

“Protesting Family: Queer Throughlines and Political Ties”

Represented by groups like PFLAG, South Korean and Korean American parents of LGBTQIA+ individuals have emerged as a compelling voice for inclusivity and social change. Their work extends beyond simply supporting one another and fostering a message of acceptance, aiming to transform and rearticulate parent-child relationships and the role of straight-identified allies in LGBTQIA+ activism. Focusing on the independent documentary film, *Coming To You* (dir. Pyön Kyu-ri, 2021), this talk discusses the place of LGBTQIA+ family activism across multiple and divergent political contexts. These include queer feminist critiques of the institution of family and marriage, calls to legalize same-sex marriage and expand the right to family formation, heightened attention to generational difference in the transnational diaspora, and lastly, the longstanding debates concerning *tangsaja* or first-person activism and the complex role of allies, witnesses, and bystanders. Han argues that these diverse throughlines compose a politics of difference that enable durable, life-affirming ties as well as purposeful, and sometimes necessary, detachments.

Nan Kim | Associate Professor of History and Faculty Affiliate in Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee



Nan Kim is Associate Professor of History and Faculty Affiliate in Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she co-directs the Public History program. Her main research interests are political dissent, memory activism, trauma, visual culture, nuclear humanities, and the interpretation of contested histories for public audiences. Her work has appeared in several publications, most recently as book chapters in two edited volumes, *Forces of Nature: New Perspectives on Korean Environments* (2023) and *The Routledge Handbook on Trauma in East Asia* (2023). Her research

monograph *Memory, Reconciliation, and Reunions in South Korea: Crossing the Divide* (2016) won the first-book prize from the Peace History Society, an affiliate of the American Historical Association. She serves as an editorial board member of *Critical Asian Studies* and begins this year as a Councilor on the board of the Society for East Asian Anthropology.

“Contested Knowledge, Polarized Korea, and Transnational Controversy over the Long-Term Release of Fukushima’s Irradiated Wastewater into the Pacific Ocean”

After years of deliberation and despite opposition by marine scientists, civic groups, and regional fishing communities, the Japanese public utility which owns the defunct Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant began late this summer to release an estimated 1.3 million tons of irradiated wastewater into the Pacific Ocean. What accounts for the intense contestation surrounding this issue, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region? Regarding the heated dispute over central questions of safety, how have competing knowledge-claims been established and why have differing ones held sway in domestic and international contexts? This paper analyzes how South Korea emerged as a key site of this controversy, where protests have opposed not only the ocean discharge itself but also the complaisant response by Yoon Suk Yeol's administration. On a regional scale this controversy has been conventionally framed as a matter of vying nationalisms, but this paper focuses instead on other critical factors at play: the role of public scrutiny, the construction and representation of scientific knowledge, the deployment of standards, and the fraught politics surrounding presumptions of international trust despite unresolved issues of historical trauma.

Sung Soo Hong (*Discussant*) | Professor of Law, Sookmyung Women’s University; Visiting Scholar at the George Washington University Institute for Korean Studies



Sung Soo Hong is a professor at Sookmyung Women’s University. His main areas of research are jurisprudence, socio-legal studies, and human rights law, and he has recently studied the issues of human rights, discrimination, hate speech, and hate crimes. He has focused on the role of law in these areas. His recent Korean publications include *Reason in Law: Understanding Law with Films* (2019), *Human Rights Systems and Institutions* (with Kim and Park, 2018), and *When Words Hurt: What is Hate Speech* (2018), which has been translated into Japanese (『ヘイトをとめるレッスン』). His most

recent English publication is “Discovering diversity: the anti-discrimination legislation movement in South Korea” (co-author with Jihye Kim), in *Rights Claiming in South Korea* (2021).

In 2008, he received a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics (LSE) for research on national human rights institutions and was a visiting researcher at the Human Rights Consortium University of London, the Center for Socio-Legal Studies University of Oxford, and the International Institute for the Sociology of Law (Spain). He has served on various advisory boards of public authorities in Korea, including the Ministry of Justice, the National Police Agency, the Ministry of National Defense, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the Korea Communications Standards Commission, the Seoul Metropolitan Government, and the National Human Rights Commission of Korea. He has also served as a commissioner or advisor to human rights NGOs in Korea such as the Rainbow Foundation, the Catholic Human Rights Commission, the Korea Human Rights Foundation, and the Center for Military Human Rights.