

# Korean Studies Frankfurt 3rd Online International Summer School

## *Korea's Political Landscape: From Seoul to Pyongyang*

**August 4 - August 8, 2025**

Korean Studies  
Goethe University Frankfurt  
Germany

**Welcome to the 3rd Online International Summer School Program “*Korea’s Political Landscape: From Seoul to Pyongyang*” organized by Korean Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany!**

**Over the course of 5 days, a total of 10 interesting lectures featuring the following topics awaits you:**

- South and North Korea’s Political Systems
- Korean Political Parties
- South Korean Democratization
- South Korea’s Right Wing Movement
- South Korean Gender Politics
- South Korea’s Political Economy
- South Korea’s Digital Governance
- South and North Korean Foreign Policy
- Political Participation Amongst Korean Youth
- Yoon Suk Yeol’s Declaration of Martial Law and Impeachment Process

**After successful participation in all lectures, you will receive a certificate of participation. We encourage you to inquire with your institution whether you can obtain credit points for your participation!**

**For information on course materials, please refer to the last page of this brochure.**

# Program Schedule

# Day 1

*Monday, August 4, 10:00AM CEST*

## **Crisis and Resilience: Democratic Regression in South Korea's Political System**

This lecture examines the characteristics of South Korea's political system based on recent developments since the putsch by former President Yoon Suk-yeol in December 2024 (e.g., self-coup, demonstrations, constitutional court decision, presidential election, criminal prosecution, etc.). Against the backdrop of the global trend of democratic regression, the focus is on understanding how an advanced democracy such as South Korea's can falter so unexpectedly and be exposed to the danger of autocratization. To this end, we will examine the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of South Korea's democracy by looking at the structure of its political institutions, the behavior of its political elites, and its overall political culture. This will provide a basic understanding of the major political challenges facing South Korea and will be used as a basis for discussing necessary and desirable reforms.



### **Hannes Mosler | University of Duisburg-Essen**

Hannes B. Mosler holds the Chair of East Asian Social Sciences with a focus on Korean politics and society at the University of Duisburg-Essen, where he is affiliated with the Institute of East Asian Studies (IN-EAST) and the Institute of Political Science (IfP). He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Seoul National University and was previously a lecturer, researcher, and professor at the Institute for Korean Studies (IKS) and the Graduate School for East Asian Studies (GEAS) at Freie Universität Berlin. His research interests include political systems, comparative (constitutional) law, civic education, memory politics, and social and political institutional change in East Asia, especially Korea.

# Day 1

Monday, August 4, 12:00PM CEST

## Korean Political Parties: Origins, Development, and Limitations

Political parties in South Korea change their names frequently and it is hard even for some Koreans to keep up with the new party names. What does this imply about Korean political parties and their capacity for democratic representation and responsiveness? This lecture begins with the historical origins of political parties on the Korean peninsula during the turbulent era of postcolonialism and national divisions and offers a snapshot of the onset of different party systems in North Korea and South Korea, respectively. It proceeds to examine the repressed development of political parties in South Korea conditioned by authoritarian regimes, presidentialism, and Cold War geopolitics. The following section moves to the post-authoritarian, democratic period when political parties underwent several significant changes, including internal decision-making structures, party membership, and the formation (and demise) of a progressive labor party. The lecture closes with an assessment of current political parties in South Korea by focusing on the limitations in representing diverse political spectrums and responding to socioeconomic agendas.

### Yoonkyung Lee | University of Toronto

Dr. Yoonkyung Lee is a professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto. She is a political sociologist with research interests 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, *Between the Streets and the Assembly: Social Movements, Political Parties, and Democracy in Korea* (University of Hawaii Press 2022) and *Militants or Partisans: Labor Unions and Democratic Politics in Korea and Taiwan* (Stanford University Press 2011), in addition to a number of journal articles and book chapters on labor movements and democratic politics. Her recent publication includes “Cold War Undercurrents: The Extreme Right Variants in East Asian Democracies,” (Politics and Society, 2021), and “Neoliberal Methods of Labor Repression: Privatized Violence and Dispossession Litigation in Korea” (Journal of Contemporary Asia, 2021: Journal of Contemporary Asia’s Best Article Prize in 2021).



# Day 2

Tuesday, August 5, 10:00AM CEST

## South Korea's Democratization Movements: Candle-Lighters and Flag-Carriers

The lecture discusses two opposing grassroots movements in South Korea: the progressive Candlelight Revolution and the conservative Flag-Carriers' Struggle. During the 2016–2017 Candlelight protests, citizens expressed hopes for national reform and personal opportunity, reflecting a forward-looking, calculated nationalism. In contrast, the Flag-Carriers resisted these changes, rejecting Park Geun-Hye's impeachment and Moon Jae-In's presidency as illegitimate. Their speeches, delivered during counterprotests from 2016 to 2019, called for recognition of the industrialization generation's legacy and upheld a more traditional national identity. These movements illustrate the deep ideological divide in South Korea, where competing visions of democracy and nationalism—one progressive and future-oriented, the other nostalgic and conservative—continue to shape the country's political landscape. This was further demonstrated at the time of Yoon Seok-Yul's insurrection on December 3, 2024.



### Gil-Soo Han | Monash University

Gil-Soo Han is a professor of communications at the School of Media, Film and Journalism, Monash University, Australia. His areas of research interest include media, religion, health, ethnicities, and nationalism. His recent publications include *Nouveauriche Nationalism and Multiculturalism in Korea* (2016, Routledge), *Funeral Rites in Contemporary Korea* (2018, Springer), *Calculated Nationalism in Contemporary South Korea* (2023, Amsterdam Univ Press), and currently completing a book project, *Korean Protestantism, Money and Nationalism* (Contracted with Amsterdam Univ Press).

# Day 2

Tuesday, August 5, 12:00PM CEST

## South Korea's Right-Wing Movement

South Korea's militant far Right acquired international notoriety after the abortive self-coup attempt by the – now impeached – former president Yoon Suk Yeol (Yun Söngnyöl). The attempt met with overwhelming resistance by citizenry and was eventually defeated, but it also demonstrated the existence of ca 10-15 percent of South Korean electorate who supported the coup on the basis of their far-Right convictions. More worrisome is the fact that some of these convictions, albeit possibly in a softer form, are also widespread among broader social strata. As I demonstrate in my lecture, these convictions rely on a particular interpretation of Korean – and world – history associated with the 'New Right' tendency in contemporary South Korean public space. 'New Rights' consider capitalism the only possible form of 'modern civilization' and interpret most of what such capitalist powers as Japan or USA have been doing in Korea and elsewhere in predominantly positive light, while demonising "Communist" China. Sinophobia is yet another salient feature of South Korean far-Right ideology which I am going to focus on. It overlaps and intersects with Islamophobia, homophobia and anti-feminism. I will attempt to shed light on both similarities and differences between far-Right ideas in South Korea and elsewhere.

### Vladimir Tikhonov | University of Oslo

Vladimir Tikhonov is a professor of Korean and East Asian studies at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, Oslo University. Previously, he taught at Kyung Hee University (Seoul, 1997-2000). His research focuses on the history of modern ideas in Korea and currently on Korean Communist movement. He published *Social Darwinism and Nationalism in Korea: the Beginnings* (Brill, 2010) as well as *Modern Korea and its Others: Perceptions of the Neighbouring Countries and Korean Modernity* (Routledge, 2015). He also recently co-authored *Intellectuals In Between: Koreans in a Changing World, 1850 to 1945* (Peter Lang, 2022) and co-edited *Buddhist Modernities - Re-inventing Tradition in the Globalizing Modern World* (Routledge, 2017) and *Military Chaplaincy in an Era of Religious Pluralism* (Oxford University Press, 2017). His most recent book is *The Red Decades: Communism as Movement and Culture in Korea, 1919–1945* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2023).



# Day 3

Wednesday, August 6, 10:00AM CEST

## Precarious Futures? Work, Wealth, and Inequality in Contemporary Korea

This presentation examines how socio-economic inequality has constituted a challenging problem for successive political administrations in contemporary South Korea. A legacy of both neoliberal reforms that followed in the wake of past economic crises and the transformation of Korea's 'developmentalist' political economic model, this problem has many dimensions. For it involves inequalities of wealth and income generated through financial restructuring and mounting household debt that have fuelled speculative real estate markets and a housing crisis, especially in Seoul. But it has also been shaped by the transformation of employment relations in ways that have led to the proliferation of nonstandard contracts or what is known in Korea as 'irregular' work. The lecture surveys some of the contours of this inequality and discusses strategies that have sought to address it with a focus on initiatives that emerged following Korea's Candlelight Protests of 2016-2017, a period whose lessons remain salient for future pro-democratic administrations.



### Jamie Doucette | University of Manchester

Dr. Jamie Doucette is Reader in Human Geography at the University of Manchester. His research interests include geographical political economy, urban studies, and labour geography. His articles have appeared in journals such as *Progress in Human Geography*, *Urban Geography*, *Transactions of the RGS-IBG*, *Political Geography*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, and *Critical Asian Studies*, among many others. He is the author of *The Postdevelopmental State: Dilemmas of Economic Democratization in Contemporary South Korea* (University of Michigan Press, 2024 OPEN ACCESS) and editor, with Bae-gyoon Park, of *Developmentalist Cities? Interrogating Urban Developmentalism in East Asia* (Brill/Haymarket 2019).

# Day 3

Wednesday, August 6, 12:00PM CEST

## Democracy in South Korea in the Post-Democratization Era: Fairness, Gender Politics, and Constitutionalism

This lecture explores the trajectory of democratic development in South Korea since its transition from authoritarian rule. Beginning with the democratic breakthrough and consolidation following the 1987 June Struggle, the course traces major political shifts and evolving democratic practices up to the recent attempted imposition of martial law by former President Yoon Suk-yeol. Special emphasis is placed on how South Korea's young generation interprets democratic progress through the normative framework of "fairness," and how this discourse intersects with growing gender-based political polarization. The lecture also critically examines the Yoon administration's declaration of martial law, the ensuing impeachment process, and their broader implications for the coexistence—and at times, the conflict—between democratic legitimacy and constitutional order in contemporary South Korean politics.

### Woojin Kang | Kyungpook National University

Woojin Kang is Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Kyungpook National University. His research examines the performance of democracy, with a particular emphasis on how democratic institutions and practices shape the everyday experiences of ordinary citizens. His recent sole-authored works include *The Deep Roots: Park Chung-hee Nostalgia, Korean Democracy* and *Park Chung-hee Nostalgia, and The Paradox of Korean Democracy: Institutional Trust Deficits*. His current research investigates the political consequences of personalized politics and partisan polarization, as well as the resurgence of authoritarian nostalgia in contemporary South Korean democracy. Professor Kang has taught at several universities in the United States and held research and visiting appointments as a Fellow at the University of Hawai'i, the Academy of Korean Studies, and as a Visiting Professor at the University of Oklahoma.



# Day 4

*Thursday, August 7, 10:00AM CEST*

## **Beyond the Peninsula: Trajectories in South Korea-Japan-China relations**

This lecture moves beyond consideration of politics within the Korean peninsula to consider the international relations of South Korea, Japan and China. It will begin with some background discussion of post-war regional relations, considering in particular the complex legacies of Japanese imperialism, the Chinese Civil War and the Korean War, all of which continue to haunt the international politics of Northeast Asia today. The lecture will then zoom into some contemporary trends and potential future trajectories of relevance to current political discussions, such as the possibility of South Korean and Japanese nuclearisation, and offer students the opportunity to discuss and develop their analysis of these developments.



### **Chris Deacon | SOAS University of London**

Chris Deacon is a Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Politics and International Relations at SOAS University of London. He holds a PhD and MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics, an MA in Korean Studies and East Asian Politics from SOAS, and a BA in Japanese Studies from Cambridge. Chris's research examines the conflictual international politics of memory and identity, with a particular focus on the so called 'history problem' in Japan-South Korea relations. His work in this area has been published in esteemed journals such as *International Studies Quarterly*, *European Journal of International Relations* and *The Pacific Review*. Before his academic career, Chris also worked as an international commercial lawyer in London, Brussels and Tokyo.

# Day 4

*Thursday, August 7, 12:00PM CEST*

## **The Evolution of Korea's Digital Government: Progressing in the Artificial Intelligence Era**

South Korea's digital government has evolved into one of the most advanced in the world, driven by a strong technological foundation and proactive governance. This lecture explores its current status, tracing the key milestones in its development and examining the factors that have facilitated progress as well as the challenges that remain. As South Korea moves forward in the era of artificial intelligence, understanding these dynamics is crucial for shaping the next phase of digital governance. Let's dive into the journey of South Korea's digital transformation and its future potential.

### **Jooho Lee | University of Nebraska, Omaha**

Jooho Lee is a professor at School of Public Administration and an associate director of Digital Governance and Analytics Lab at University of Nebraska, Omaha. Areas of his research interest include public management with an emphasis on information and communication technology use in public organizations and the application of social network theories in public management issues such as interagency and interorganizational collaboration. His research has appeared in public administration and electronic government journals such as *Public Administration Review*, *Public Administration*, *Public Management Review*, *Policy Studies Journal*, *Government Information Quarterly*, *American Review of Public Administration*, and *Administration and Society*. He earned his Ph.D. in Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.



# Day 5

*Friday, August 8, 10:00AM CEST*

## **Central Features of North Korea's Political System, Legitimacy, and Regime Survival**

Since the foundation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1948 the country has taken a route that is different from other socialist systems, and state socialism underwent several changes. This lecture first defines central concepts and discusses different regime types and mechanisms of regime survival. More specifically, it then explores the main features of North Korea's political system by also looking at the role and relevance of nominally democratic institutions such as the legislature. The lecture addresses the question of legitimacy and central factors shaping state-society relations in the DPRK.



### **Sabine Burghart | University of Turku**

Dr. Sabine Burghart is University Lecturer and Academic Director of the Master's Degree Programme in East Asian Studies at the University of Turku in Finland. Before joining the Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS) in Turku, she was lecturer and researcher at the Department of East Asian Studies of the University of Vienna. Between 2018 and 2021, she was also a co-researcher at the Goethe University Frankfurt. Her current research interests concern foreign aid, institutions and ownership in development partnerships. She spent more than five years of her professional career in Korea, and facilitated various capacity building projects and three EU-DPRK workshops in North Korea.

# Day 5

Friday, August 8, 12:00PM CEST

## Producing Boundaries: North Korean Foreign Policy and the Evolving Nuclear State Identity

North Korea's development of nuclear weapons is one of the most pressing challenges facing international politics. Yet, our understanding of Pyongyang's underlying motives for the decision to go nuclear remains by and large limited to conventional aspects of the nuclear issue. While numerous studies have addressed the technical and strategic aspects of the nuclear program, the domestic and foreign political context in which it developed, and the possible (and sometimes not so possible) ways to resolve the challenge, the presentation will show that the significance of the nuclear program reaches far beyond the realm of conventional strategic thinking. In fact, the transformation to a 'nuclear weapon state' (*haek poyuguk*) has become the most important identity project of and for the North Korean state. The lecture therefore scrutinizes the practical foreign policy effects of identity in the context of the nuclear issue, discussing how identity informs and influences foreign policy and how particular identity constructions are enacted through foreign policy.

### Eric Ballbach | Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

Dr. Eric J. Ballbach serves as Korea Foundation Fellow at the Asia Research Division of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik) in Berlin. He previously served as director of the Research Unit "North Korea and International Security" at Freie Universität Berlin's Institute of Korean Studies. Dr. Ballbach's research focuses on North and South Korean foreign and security policies, in particular EU-Korea relations, the sanctions regime(s) against North Korea, North Korea's participation in international organizations and identity politics on the Korean peninsula. Dr. Ballbach advises various institutions of the German government as well as the EU and NATO on Korea-related issues. In the past, he participated in numerous informal Track 1.5 initiatives involving high-ranking representatives from the DPRK, the ROK and the US. Dr. Ballbach is regularly consulted by national and international media outlets on current developments on the Korean Peninsula and the Indo-Pacific.



We will be sharing preparatory readings for the lectures as well as additional materials through the learning platform *Moodle*.

For information on how to obtain access, please subscribe to our mailing list:



In case of inquiries, please contact the program coordinator, Ms. Alexandra Fuchs: [ale.fuchs@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:ale.fuchs@em.uni-frankfurt.de)

