

HTST 503 Modern Korea, 1600-Present



From top, clockwise: Sin Saimdang, a Chosŏn Dynasty 'model' Confucian on South Korean currency; statue of North Korean leader Kim Il Sung; "Massacre in Korea", by Picasso, 1951; K-Pop singer 'Psy' dancing

Fall Session 2013 , Wednesdays, 2:00-4:45

Instructor: Brian Gold

Course description

This is a seminar on the modern history of Korea. The 'early modern' for East Asia and Korea began after the Imjin Wars/Hideyoshi invasion of Korea (fought between China, Korea, and Japan) of 1592-1598. It is impossible to fully understand contemporary Korea without some understanding of the last three centuries of the last 'traditional' dynasty of Korea, the Chosŏn dynasty (1392 – 1910). That being said, about 80% of class time will be focused on Korea from its forced 'opening' by the Japanese in 1876 to the present. As much as possible the Korean historical record will be understood in a regional and global context. So, for example, students making well-informed comparisons between the Japanese colonization of Korea versus, say, the German occupation of Poland in WWII, or the subtle differences between the presentation of the Korean 'modern girl' in a K-Pop group such as 'Girl's Generation' and the representation of women in Japanese 'cute culture' will be most welcome.

Major topics will be *silhak* and other possible signs of modernity in the late Chosŏn dynasty, the formation of Korean nationalism and racial thought, Korea as a subject of imperialism, primarily Japanese but also of other countries e.g. China and the U.S., the Korean War (focusing on the political and social dimensions), the 'crazy' regime of North Korea, and the 'miracles' of South Korea in democratization and industrialization. The term will end with a look at Korean (North and South) religious modernity, and with a look at the 'Korean Wave' [*hallyu*] of pop culture, a little bit of which has recently penetrated North America in the form of Psy's 'Kangnam Style'. (Psy may not be ever mentioned again....)

There will be a wide variety of readings from top scholars of Korean and East Asian history. A general required history for the course available in the bookstore is *Korea in World History* by Donald Clark.