

SCOTTISH CENTRE FOR KOREAN STUDIES
DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

Reactionary Politics in South Korea: Historical Legacies, Right-Wing Intellectuals, and Political Mobilization

Monday 22nd April

15.00 - 17.00

Project Room 1.06, 50 George Square

This talk tackles how the right-wing has shaped the post-authoritarian South Korean politics over the last four decades. I will examine why, despite the arrival of electoral democracy in 1987, rapidly changing geopolitical conditions, and popular demands for socioeconomic reforms, the South Korean Right continues to deploy outdated anti-communist rhetoric and authoritarian legacies as their ideological arsenal, and why many ordinary citizens support a right-wing movement that strongly resists prodemocratic changes. Drawing from rich qualitative data collected through ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, and archival sources, I demonstrate that right-wing forces have maintained their hegemonic position by capitalizing on Cold War contestation and constantly engineering fear and hate toward North Korea and South Korea's left-leaning forces. Examining how interactions between right-wing intellectuals, political institutions, and historical legacies of war and authoritarianism have constructed conservative identity and narratives, my talk will broaden the understanding of the dynamics and mobilization processes of the Right.



Myungji Yang was born and raised in South Korea and is a political sociologist who studies the ways in which the relationship among historical legacies, political institutions, and civil society shape political processes and outcomes. Pursuing comparative historical and qualitative methods. She is interested in understanding the social origins of contemporary political dynamics and outcomes. Myungji Yang earned her PhD in Sociology from Brown University in 2012, and has worked at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa since 2013. She has also served as a visiting fellow at the USC Korean Studies Institute (2015-16), MaxPo (2019-20), and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (2020-21). Myungji Yang's research has appeared at *Politics and Society*, *Mobilization: An International Inquiry*, *Urban Studies*, *Sociological Inquiry*, and she is the author of *From Miracle to Mirage* (2018, Cornell University Press).