



Tübingen Korean Studies Lecture Series

Winter Semester 2023/24, Wednesdays 18:00 C.T., Wilhelmstraße 133, Room 30

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

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Professor Myungji Yang is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa. Her research interests include political sociology, social movements, and development in East Asia and Korea. Her work appeared at *Nations and Nationalism*, *Politics and Society*, *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, and *Urban Studies*, among others. She is also the author of "From Miracle to Mirage: The Making and Unmaking of the Korean Middle Class, 1960-2015" published by Cornell University Press in 2018. She has 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).



This talk tackles broad questions about what fuels right-wing mobilization and why some citizens vehemently resist pro-democratic changes in South Korea. Drawing from ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, and archival data, it aims to understand how the right has constructed its political identity and mobilized social support, and how its political practices have contributed to particular political outcomes during the post-authoritarian period. Despite the arrival of electoral democracy in 1987 and changing geopolitical conditions, the Korean right has continued to deploy anti-communist rhetoric to condemn liberal progressive groups, accusing them of subverting the Republic of Korea. Exploring how right-wing elites and intellectuals capitalize on Cold War geopolitical contestation and glorify the national modernization projects of authoritarian regimes, this talk will demonstrate how the Korean right has constructed ideological and organizational infrastructures and maintained its hegemonic position in the post-authoritarian period.