War and Memory in Modern East Asia

Throughout much of the 20th century, East Asia was engulfed in international and civil wars. The legacies of these wars remain contentious and unresolved. Looking at conflicts and episodes such as the Sino-Japanese War, the "comfort woman" incident, the Korean War, the Chinese Civil War, and the Vietnam War, this course explains the historical origins of the so-called "history wars" in East Asia.

Outline

**Week One: Introduction (Asia-Pacific War 1931-1945)**

In the first half of the lecture, students are introduced to some of the main questions and themes of the course. Why, compared to Europe, are historical conflicts so present in East Asia? What structural and ideological conditions produced East Asia's 20th century history of warfare? How have societies dealt with the legacies of this violence. The rest of the lecture will be on Japanese the invasion of China and the broader Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945), and some of the societal and interstate conflicts over the issue that persist to today.

**Week Two: Japan's colonization of Korea and the "Comfort Women" issue (1905-1945).**

Here, students will be provided with a brief history of Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula through warfare. In particular, Dr Wright will focus on the psychological legacies of this experience within Korea and contemporary conflicts that still exist between and within Japan and Korea. A major emphasis will be on the "comfort women" issue, and its contemporary resonance. The issue of "collaboration" within Korea will also be addressed.

**Week Three: The Korean War (1945-1953).** Often taught in North America as a "Satellite War", this lecture will focus on the civil dimensions of the Korean War. The main focus will be on how both of the Koreas have fashioned their own narratives of the unresolved war as a source of legitimacy for their state. A secondary theme will focus on how South Korean citizens have challenged the state's interpretation of the conflict over the issue of violence.

**Week Four: The Chinese Civil War and Revolution.** This lecture will introduce students to the Chinese civil war and subsequent incidents of revolution and trauma such as the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution". The latter half will focus on shifts in the meaning of these calamitous events throughout China's modern history.

**Week Five: The Vietnam Revolution (1945-1975).** Orthodox histories of the conflict and its legacies tend to offer an "American-centric" view of the conflict. While not discounting US involvement, this lecture will principally explore the internal dynamics of revolution which fueled the civil war. A secondary concern will be the overlooked role of Korean forces in the conflict, and the war's broader pan-Asian
character. The lecture will conclude with a reflection on the war’s meaning, at the communal, national, and global level.

**Week Six: Transitional Justice and Trans-Pacific Memories of War (1987-Present).**

The end of the Cold War brought a new wave of democratization across the region. A part of this process was a critical reexamining of the past within and between nations. This is sometimes called "transitional justice". This lecture will explain to students some of the processes associated with this endeavour, such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, artistic works, and various forms of civic engagement. Of particular emphasis will an exploration of the rise of a "transnational" discourse, as the struggle over the memory of these conflicts is becoming increasingly globalized. We will discuss to what extent these new forms of memory work oppose, or work within, previous nationalist discourses.