

CENTRE FOR KOREAN RESEARCH

Friday 13 November

3:30 – 5:00pm

C.K. Choi Building Conference Room #120  
1855 West Mall

**South Korean Civil Society Organizations and the Political Process of Historical Memories**

By Professor Jungmin Seo (University of Hawaii at Manoa)

This presentation reviews how historical issues have entered into the field of political contentions in South Korea, and in East Asia in general, and examines the role of CSOs in the process. The disputes over the right interpretations on history in East Asia have sufficiently been discussed in academics as well as in public media as it has been regarded as collisions between the nation states or the nationalisms. Very few analysis or reports, however, have devoted to reveal the role of CSOs in this process although most of them very well recognize CSOs' crucial roles in this process. Even worse, academia has not properly identified or surveyed the structure, resources or networks of CSOs that brought the historical issues to international discussion agenda. Mainly using the in-depth interviews with the leading members of the Korean CSOs related to historical issues, especially the Comfort Women issue, along with other data, such as the news coverage on the historical issues, I suggest that the role of CSOs in appropriating the official narratives, providing acceptable forms of narratives to the media, mediating governments and the victims of the World War II atrocities, and creating spaces for international civil societies were crucial factors in politicization of history in East Asia.

Jungmin Seo is an assistant professor in the department of political science, University of Hawaii at Manoa, where he teaches Chinese and Korean politics. His main research interest is the various forms of nationalism in contemporary East Asia. Currently, he is conducting

a number of research projects on inter-Asian migration and politics of memories in Northeast Asia.

