

THE CENTRE FOR KOREAN RESEARCH PROUDLY PRESENTS

# "VISUALIZING VIOLENCE: FORENSIC MEDICINE, BODY AS EVIDENCE, AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY KOREA"

By Dr. Jisoo M. Kim  
George Washington University

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2019  
3:30PM-5:00PM

MULTIPURPOSE ROOM,  
LIU INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL ISSUES  
6476 NW MARINE DRIVE, VANCOUVER, BC V6T 1Z2



**Abstract:** This lecture explores the theme of criminal justice in Chosŏn Korea (1392-1910) by investigating forensic medicine and the postmortem examination of dead bodies. It focuses on homicide cases to probe into the cultural meaning of interpersonal violence. These homicide stories provide a window for us to understand how criminal justice was socially and culturally shaped and altered over time. A few of the many questions that will be answered in this study include: What knowledge of medicine was applied when seeking the cause of death, how were "law" and "medicine" complexly intertwined to shape and mold legal reasoning and argument, how did forensic practice evolve in the Chosŏn, how did inquest officials reconstruct crime scenes and visualize violence when performing an autopsy, and how did inquest officials treat different forms of legal and medical knowledge in the practice of post-mortem examination? By analyzing a wide array of sources, including forensic texts, inquest reports, criminal records, legal codes, royal edicts, and veritable records, this study demonstrates the development of forensic medicine and how forensic practice was associated with Neo-Confucian concepts such as benevolent rule, leniency, and judicial prudence.

**Bio:** Jisoo M. Kim is Korea Foundation Associate Professor of History, International Affairs, and East Asian Languages and Literatures at the George Washington University. She is also Director of the GW Institute for Korean Studies. Her broader research interests include crime and justice, forensic medicine, the history of emotions, literary representations of the law, diglossia, the vernacular, and gender and sexuality. Her first book, *The Emotions of Justice: Gender, Status, and Legal Performance in Chosŏn Korea* (University of Washington Press, 2015), received the 2017 James B. Palais Book Prize. She is currently working on two book projects, tentatively titled *Crimes of Violence: Forensic Medicine, Dead Bodies, and Legal Culture in Early Modern Korea* and *Sexual Desire and Gendered Subjects: Decriminalization of Adultery in Korean History*.



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