

## Program in Transnational Korean Studies

### Presents:

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Galbraith Room, HSS 4025



### Interrogating the “Population Problem” of the Non-Western Empire: Japanese Colonialism, the Korean Peninsula, and the Global Geopolitics of Race

In this talk, I examine the colonial discourse of population in Korea under Japanese rule (1910–1945). I consider the recent call of Alison Bashford to draw attention to the geopolitical and spatial dimensions of the colonial population discourse in the non-Western Japanese Empire and to interrogate global population from the perspective of East Asian imperialism. By opening up the colonial archives on population through an examination of colonial state and pro-state magazines in Korea such as Chōsen (Korea) and Chōsen oyobi Manchu (Korea and Manchuria), I argue that the Japanese term *jinkō* (population) was the quintessential term of the empire and that the Korean Peninsula constituted the nucleus of Japan’s imperial management of population. I demonstrate how metropolitan and colonial elites, including imperial and colonial state officials, politicians, intellectuals, physicians, and so on, at pains to build Japan’s empire, engaged in the debates on *jinkō mondai* (population problem) in 1920s and 1930s Korea. The details of the debate bring to light the ways in which the management of the population problem undergirded the complex issues of the peninsula and the empire at large, including emigration, Japanese settlement, the cultivation of Manchuria, the development of mining and heavy chemical industries, the Sino-Japanese War, Western imperial rule, the emancipation of the colored populations/races, and so on. I delineate how these details were deeply imbedded in the racialized struggle between the Japanese race/colored races vs. the white race in the global governance of the population and territory in the final phase of Japanese imperial aggression. By going beyond the Western, Anglo-Saxon debates on population, this study ultimately seeks to showcase how East Asian imperial power responded to the white, Western discourse of “race suicide vs. the yellow peril.”