Northeast Asia, as defined to include China, Japan, North and South Korea, undoubtedly constitutes one of the largest economic zones in the world in terms of population, natural resources, and potential market size, as well as its vast trade and investment opportunities. It has been and still is one of the most dynamic areas of the world economy, mainly owing to the phenomenal economic growth of the region’s market economies, and, more recently, also that of China. Despite the noteworthy economic achievements, this region remains somewhat unstable from the political point of view: the territorial division and continuing stalemate between North and South Korea, Japanese-Soviet territorial disputes, tense PRC-Taiwan relations, without mentioning the pivotal and much debated role played by the United States.

The main objective of this course is to shed light on the relevant features of the relationships among the main regional actors, and between them and the United States. In this regard, the main focus of the course will be considering the sources of tension among actors and understanding to what extent these tensions could undermine the pacific coexistence in the region. Therefore, in order to understand the actual situation of the region, particular attention will be given to the historical framework since the Japanese defeat in WWII. Particular attention will be reserved to the actual situation of the Korean peninsula as, on one hand, “battlefield” – by looking carefully at the nature of the relations between China and the DPRK and between the USA and the ROK – and, on the other hand, as diplomatic terrain through the implementation of the Sunshine Policy and the establishment of the six-party talks.

Course Requirements: As class participation is an important part of the final course grade, students are expected to attend each class period unless unusual circumstances preclude it. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions, and to give a short presentation on a subject given by the instructor, and within the framework of this course.

Grades: Grades will be based on active participation (70%) and on the final presentation (30%).

Reading Assignments will consist of journal articles, substantial scholarly opinion columns as well as excerpts from books. All of these reading materials will be in English as will the lectures. Among others, the following two books represent a very good approach to the course topics:

READINGS AND DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

First week: Introduction to Conflict and Peace Theoretical Framework and to International Relations of Northeast Asia

Readings:

Second week: East Asia After the Cold War

Readings:

Video: University of California Television. Conversations With History: Rise of Asia and Decline of the West (Kishore Mahbubani, 2008).

Discussion: Do you consider this as the Asian Century? What are the main characteristics of Northeast Asia as you know it?

Third week: The Korean Peninsula

Readings:

Video: Kimjongilia (2009), directed by N.C. Heikin.

Discussion: How would you solve the North Korean issue? What is the future of the Korean peninsula?

Fourth week: China’s Rise and its Role in the Region
Readings:

Video: **China: The Rebirth of an Empire** (2010), directed by Jesse and Jeremy Veverka.

Discussion: **What’s the role of PRC in the Northeast Asian region? Do you think China is going to assume the role of “regional hegemon” (and what will it mean for its neighbors and for the United States).**

**Fifth week: Japan and the United States: Two Pivotal Actors in the Region**

Readings:

Video: **Empires at War** (2008), directed by A. Dufour.

Discussion: **Is the US a “Pacific” Power? What’s the real role US is playing in Asia?**