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Diplomatic History Speaker Series

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Bruce Cumings

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"Pacific Ascendancy: Or, A Non-Atlanticist View of the American Position in the World"

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Thursday, October 6, 2011

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(Please note: The audio may not be working for some of the introduction, but the lecture itself is fine.)

Bruce Cumings is the Gustavus F. and Ann M. Swift Distinguished Service Professor in History and the College Department Chairperson at the University of Chicago. His research and teaching focuses on modern Korean history, 20th century international history, U.S.-East Asian relations, East Asian political economy, and American foreign relations.

His first book, *The Origins of the Korean War* (Princeton University Press, 1981, 1990), won the John King Fairbank Book Award of the American Historical Association, and the second volume of this study won the Quincy Wright Book Award of the International Studies Association. He has just completed [Dominion From Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power](#) (Yale University Press, 2009).

Cumings is the editor of the modern volume of the *Cambridge History of Korea* (forthcoming), and is a frequent contributor to *The London Review of Books*, *The Nation*, *Current History*, *the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, and *Le Monde Diplomatique*. His work has appeared in *Modern China*, *Journal of Korean Studies*, *International Organization*, *World Policy Journal*, *New Left Review*, *Diplomatic History*, *Radical History Review*, *The National Interest*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Nation*, *British Journal of International Studies*, and *Critical Asian Studies*.



Bruce Cumings

Gustavus F. and Ann M. Swift Distinguished Service Professor in History
University of Chicago

In 2007 he won the Kim Dae Jung Prize for Scholarly Contributions to Democracy, Human Rights and Peace. He is currently working on a synoptic single-volume study of the origins of the Korean War, and a book on the Northeast Asian political economy.

Cumings received his PhD from Columbia University in 1975.

Abstract

Dominion From Sea to Sea is a non-Atlanticist account of America's position in the world over the last 150 years, one that sees the U.S. as the only advanced industrial power with long Atlantic and Pacific coastlines — a tremendous comparative advantage. It emphasizes the importance of American encounters with people of color on the continent -- Mexico in the 1840s, the Philippines in the years 1898-1903, and East Asia since 1941 -- in exploring the history of unilateralism and how this experience shaped a very different encounter with the world than did Atlanticism. The book tries to bridge the academic boundary between Western history and our Pacific history, which is rarely done in the literature, and also argues for the central importance of Western high-tech industries in the dominant American position in the world since 1941. It is thus a mix of history and political economy.

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