

Conserving the Yellow Sea: From an Anthropocene Perspective

Young Rae Choi

The Yellow Sea, a semi-enclosed sea between China and the two Koreas, is arguably the most populated and the most intensively exploited sea in the world given that it occupies a mere 380,000 km² of the Earth's surface while accommodating more than 200 million people in its watershed. The modern history of the Yellow Sea tells a story of remarkable transformations under the name of modernization and state-building to the degree that there is no 'first-nature.' The Yellow Sea, in this sense, is a precursor of what natures would look like in the Anthropocene. This material reality of the Yellow Sea not only challenges conservationists whose actions are based on the idea of nature-society dualism but creates confusing and inseparable development-conservation entanglements in today's context of neoliberal natures. In an age where no 'wilderness' is left, what should be conserved and what it means to conserve? In this seminar, I interrogate these questions by introducing recent discussions and debates around the concept of the Anthropocene and by interpreting major issues in the Yellow Sea from an Anthropocene perspective. Conservation, I argue, should be significantly remade in acknowledgment of social and vibrant natures emerging from previous and ongoing transformations.

Dr. Young Rae Choi is Assistant Professor in Global & Sociocultural Studies at Florida International University. She received her PhD in Geography from Ohio State University in 2015. Previously, she served as national conservation coordinator of the WWF/KIOST Yellow Sea Ecoregion Support Project in South Korea. As a human-environmental geographer, her research interests encompass issues at the intersection of economic development and environmental conservation in marine and coastal spaces. Using political ecology and critical political economy, her dissertation research interrogated the complexity and interwovenness of development-conservation relations with a focus on large-scale coastal land reclamation in East Asia. She is currently working on a book, tentatively titled, "The Yellow Sea: A Window onto the Anthropocene."

Date & Time: Jun 8 (Thur.) 2017, 12:00-13:00

Place: SNUAC Rm #406