John G. Grisafi, PhD

Email: john.g.grisafi@gmail.com Website: grisafiresearch.org

EMPLOYMENT

Postdoctoral Fellow, Nam Center for Korean Studies, University of Michigan, 2025–2027
- Korea Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow, 2025–2026
- NCKS Postdoctoral Fellow, 2026–2027

Teaching Fellow, Yale University, 2021–2023

Japanese & Korean Technical Services Assistant, Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania, 2017–2019

Contributor and Analyst, NK News/NK Pro, 2013–2017

Korean Linguist and Military Analyst, United States Army, 2003–2013

EDUCATION

Degrees & Diplomas

PhD, Religious Studies, Yale University, 2025
- Fields of Study: Asian Religions; Religion & Modernity
- Dissertation: "The Shaping of Religion through Empire in Modern Korea, 1876–1948"
- Committee: Hwansoo Kim, Tisa Wenger, Eric Greene

MPhil/MA (en route), Religious Studies, Yale University, 2023

MA (terminal), East Asian Languages & Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania, 2018
- Concentration: Korean Studies
- Thesis: "U.S. Occupation and the Religious Cold War in Korea: Religious Policy and Strategy of the U.S. Occupation of South Korea, 1945-1948"
- Committee: Eugene Park and Jolyon Thomas

BA, East Asian Languages & Civilizations, History, University of Pennsylvania, 2017
- Concentrations: Korean Studies; World History
- Distinctions: Dean's Scholar, Summa cum laude, Dean's List

Diploma, Korean Language, Defense Language Institute, 2005

Other Educational & Professional Development Programs

Global Unification Academy, National Institute for Unification Education, ROK Ministry of Unification, 2025

Kim Koo Professional Series, Korea Society, 2021

Summer Japanese Language Program, Sun Academy Nihongo Center, 2021

Kyujanggak Korean Studies Summer Workshop, Seoul National University, 2020

Knowing North Korea Workshop, National Committee on North Korea, 2018

Korean Language Enhancement and Assessment Program, Kyunghee University, 2010

Advanced Leader Course, U.S. Army, 2012

Basic Leader Course, U.S. Army, 2007

TEACHING EXPERIENCE, FULL COURSES

University of Michigan

"Nam Center Undergraduate Fellows Research Seminar," Fall 2025, Winter, 2026, Fall 2026, Winter 2027

Yale University (as Teaching Fellow)

"Philosophy of Religion," with John Pittard, Spring 2023

"Buddhist Thought: The Foundations," with Eric Greene, Fall 2022

"Introduction to Chinese Philosophy," with Lucas Bender and Eric Greene, Spring 2022

"Religion and Culture in Korea," co-instructor with Hwansoo Kim, Fall 2021

TEACHING EXPERIENCE, INDIVIDUAL LECTURES

"The History Behind *KPop Demon Hunters*," Ann Arbor District Library, February 2026

"Religion in Korea: Diversity and Diffusion, Past and Present," Program for Teaching East Asia (TEA), 2022, 2023, 2025

"한국 현대의 종교성," in "Advanced Korean III," for Hyunsung Lim, Yale University, Fall 2024

"한국교회와 사회문제," in "Advanced Korean V," for Seungja Choi, Yale University, Fall 2024

"Situating and Interpreting Juche," in "North Korean History," for Ria Chae, Yale University, Spring 2021

"Korean History Lecture Series," Connecticut Korean Presbyterian Church Sunday School, January–March 2020

"The 'Other Korea': What is North Korea Really Like?" Bristol Public Library, September 2021

"Religions of Korea," Connecticut Korean Presbyterian Church Sunday School, December 2019

"North Korea: What Do We Know?" at "Basketball Diplomacy and the North Korean Mind: Film and Discussion," World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, November 2016

FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS

Pony Chung Fellowship, Research Institute for Korean Studies, 2025

Emerging Leaders Fellowship, National Institute for Unification Education (MoU), 2025

Korea Foundation Fellowship for Postdoctoral Research, 2025

CEAS Dissertation Fellowship, Yale University, 2024

Scholarship for studying Korean Religion from Venerable Jeongmok, 2023

CEAS Field Research Grant, Yale University, 2023

FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS (continued)

CEAS Summer Language Mini-Grant, Yale University, 2021

Franke Fellowship in the Humanities, Yale University, 2019

James Joo-Jin Kim Program in Korean Studies Graduate Research Grant, University of Pennsylvania, 2017

Undergraduate Fellowship, James Joo-Jin Kim Program in Korean Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 2016–2017

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

"A Marginal Religion and COVID-19 in South Korea: Shincheonji, Public Discourse, and the Shaping of Religion," *Nova Religio* 25, no. 1 (August 2021): 40–63.

Articles in Progress

"Religion-State Relations in Korean History: Establishment, Shaping, and Regulation," *Religion Compass*, revise and resubmit

"Traces of Seoul's Shinto Shrines: Memory and Legacy of Japanese Colonial Shrines in South Korea's Capital," under review

"Korean Place, Art, and Religion in *KPop Demon Hunters*," manuscript submitted

Paper on Historiographic and Ideological Narratives of Religion in North Korean Textbooks, in progress

"Legacies of Japanese Colonialism Toward Korean Religion in Contemporary Korean Media"

Books

Religion and Empire in Korea: The Shaping of a Modern Idea, manuscript in progress

Other Journal Articles (not peer-reviewed)

"Popular Anxieties and Miyazaki's Optimism: Concerns about the Youth and Future of Japan in Popular Culture of the Post-Bubble Economic Era," *Penn Asian Review* 6 (Spring 2016): 15–19. (Undergraduate journal)

Essays and Other Features

"The History of Korean Studies at Yale University/예일대학교 한국학 역사." In *110 Years of History and Identity of the Korean-Americans in Connecticut*. The Korean-American Society of Connecticut, 2026.

"Discourses on Religion in the US and Their Complex Influences in Japan and Korea," *American Religion*, 22 February 2021.

Book Reviews

"Heonik Kwon and Jun Hwan Park, *Spirit Power: Politics and Religion in Korea's American Century*," *Journal of American-East Asian Religions* 30, no. 2 (May 2023).

Journalistic News Reports & Analyses (selections)

"DPRK history: the 170mm self-propelled gun in the Iran-Iraq War," *NK News*, 19 June 2016.

"N. Korean 'human roller coaster' case of mistaken identity," *NK News*, 13 June 2016.

"N.Korea reveals details of 300mm multiple rocket launcher," *NK News*, 4 March 2016.

"North Korea's nuclear force reshuffles its politics, economy," *NK News*, 11 February 2016.

"Ma Won Chun reappears after 11-month absence, purge rumor," *NK News*, 8 October 2015.

"Pointing the world's largest bomb at North Korea," *NK News*, 27 September 2015.

"Wonsan Airport nears completion, with potential for impact on tourism and economy," *NK Pro*, 30 July 2015.

"North Korea's million man army in post-unification Korea," *NK News*, 31 May 2015.

"Imagery reveals renovations of Pyongyang airfields," *NK News*, 28 May 2015.

"South Korea faces tough choice on THAAD," *NK News*, 24 March 2015.

"Wonsan airport undergoing major renovation, expansion," *NK Pro*, 19 January 2015.

"Three-year anniversary of Kim Jong Il's death important milestone," *NK News*, 17 December 2014.

"Kim Jong Un still a no-show, but coup unlikely," *NK News*, 9 October 2014.

"The An-2: N. Korea's surprisingly capable Soviet-era biplane," *NK News*, 16 September 2014.

"Recent launches revealed as surface-to-surface missile," *NK Pro*, 16 August 2014.

"Deploying THAAD on the Korean Peninsula," *NK News*, 28 July 2014.

"Two Koreas to resume joint excavation of ancient palace," *NK News*, 24 July 2014.

"Crashed drones reveal state of North's drone program," *NK News*, 3 April 2014.

"The threat of North Korea's new rocket artillery," *NK News*, 13 March 2014.

PRESENTATIONS & TALKS

Invited Talks

"Religious Freedom in East Asia: Legal Prosecution of Unification Church in Japan and South Korea" (panel), Heterodox East Asia Forum, November 2025

"Religious Freedom in East Asia" (panel), Heterodox East Asia Forum, April 2025

"Constructing Religion in Korea under Japanese and American Rule," Choson History Society, September 2023

"Chairman Lee, Shincheonji, and COVID-19: The Verdict" (panel),Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), February 2021

***Invited Talks* (continued)**

"Covering North Korea: Analysis, Journalism, Scholarship" featured speaker event, ThiNK at Yale, Yale University, December 2019

Research Presentations

"Teaching Korean Religion with *KPop Demon Hunters*," American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 2026

"Core Concepts: How American Protestant Religiosity Shaped Korean Nationalism," Perspectives on Contemporary Korea Conference, University of Michigan, October 2026

"Legacies of Japanese Colonialism toward Religion in Contemporary Korean Media: Murayama Chijun, *Exhuma*, and *Save Me*," Association for Asian Studies Conference, March 2026

"The Subjectivity of Liberation and Oppression in Modern Korean Religion," American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 2025

"Paradoxical Legacies of Japanese Colonialism in Contemporary Korean Narratives of Religion," Religious Mosaic: New Perspectives on Faith and Tradition in Contemporary Korea, May 2025

"The Inter-imperial Construction of Religion in Korea's Open Ports Era, 1876–1905," Association for Asian Studies Conference, March 2025

"The Inter-imperial Formation of 'Religion' in Open Ports Korea, 1876–1905," Kyujanggak International Symposium on Korean Studies, Seoul National University, November 2024

"Postcolonial Memory and Traces of Seoul's Shinto Shrines: The Palimpsest of Japanese Colonial Religion in South Korea's Capital," American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 2023

"Cold War Reconfigurations of Religion in US-Occupied South Korea," AAS-in-Asia Conference, Kyungpook University, June 2023

"Critically Demystifying North Korea's Approach to Religion and Religious Freedom," Korean Studies Research Hub Graduate Workshop, University of Melbourne, June 2022

"Setting the Boundaries of Religious Freedom and National Interest in North Korea," 44th Annual Susman Graduate History Conference, Rutgers University, April 2022

"Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Americanism in the North Korean Understanding of Religion," Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, March 2022

"The Limits of Religious Freedom in North Korea: How the North Understands Religion," USC KSI Graduate Symposium, University of Southern California, February 2022

"Rational Restriction on Religion? How North Korea Conceives of Religious Freedom," New England Association for Asian Studies Conference, Harvard University, December 2021

Research Presentations **(continued)**

"The Boundaries of Religious Freedom in North Korea: Excluding Religion to Protect the Revolutionary State," Graduate Student Conference on "Religion and (Breaking) Boundaries," Boston University, September 2021

"A Marginal Religion and COVID-19 in South Korea: Shincheonji, Public Discourse, and the Shaping of Religion," 8th Annual Korea University Graduate Student Conference, Korea University, May 2021

"The Memory and Legacy of Shinto Shrine Sites in Seoul: The Geography of Colonial Religious Topoi," Contesting Memorial Spaces in the Asia-Pacific Conference, Kyushu University, November 2020

"Marginal Religion and COVID-19 in Korea: Shincheonji, Public Discourse, and the Shaping of Categorical Language," New England Association for Asian Studies Conference, University of Vermont, October 2020

"Mapping the Traces of the Kami: A Geographic Historiography of Shinto Shrine Sites in Seoul," Beyond Boundaries: Fifth Annual Symposium, Yale University, event cancelled

"City Boundaries and the Traces of the Kami: Borders, Urban Spaces, and the Legacy and Memory of Shinto Shrines in Seoul," Harvard East Asia Society Conference 2020, Harvard University, February 2020

"A 'Laissez Faire Policy?' Defining and Categorizing Religion in Occupied South Korea," Implicit Religion USA conference, Monmouth University, June 2019

"'Nothing Less Than a Religious War': The Genesis of the Religious Cold War in Korea," 2019 International Graduate Conference on the Cold War, George Washington University, May 2019

"Managing Post-Colonial Religious Rights: Religious Freedom and Religions Policy of the U.S. Military Occupation of South Korea, 1945-1948," Penn EALC Graduate Conference: Myth, Management, and Materiality, University of Pennsylvania, April 2019

"Benevolent Neutrality: Religious Freedom and Religions Policy of the U.S. Military Occupation of South Korea, 1945-1948," 28th Annual Graduate Student Conference on East Asia, Columbia University, February 2019

"Fostering Freedom and Faith: Religious Liberty and Christianization in the U.S. Occupation of South Korea, 1945-1948," 47th Annual Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies Conference, November 2018

"Politics, Public, and Shamans: Marginalization of Shamanism in Korea, Past and Present," 6th International Conference of NextGen Korean Studies Scholars, University of Michigan, May 2018

Religious and National Identity in Korea, 1860-1945," 46th Annual Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies Conference, October 2017

"Respected but Marginalized: The Paradoxical Treatment of Shamanism in South Korea," James Joo-Jin Kim Program in Korean Studies Undergraduate Fellow Research Symposium, University of Pennsylvania, May 2017

Research Presentations **(continued)**

"The Soviet-based Korean Communist Movement beyond Kim Il Sung," Structure & Subordination: Law, Science, and Religion in East Asia graduate conference, University of Pennsylvania, April 2017

"The Politics of Shintō in Colonial Korea: Religion on the Margins of Japan's Empire," 26th Annual Graduate Student Conference on East Asia, Columbia University, February 2017

"Shintō in Colonial Korea: A Broadening Narrative of Imperial Era Shintō," What Isn't Shinto? Shinto Symposium 2016, University of Pennsylvania, September 2016

Roundtables

"Religion, Barriers, Possibilities," in "Disability as Possibility: A Panel in Honor of Mark R. Bookman," Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, February 2023

"A More Credible Deterrent?: Nuclear and Missile Developments in North Korea, 2016," in "Missiles, Nukes, Markets, Madman?: North Korea in 2016" North Korea Roundtable, University of Pennsylvania, October 2016

MEDIA OUTREACH & MENTIONS

Quoted Interviews and Commentary

Adrianne Totu-Frank, "UMich postdoctoral fellow talks cultural history behind 'KPop Demon Hunters' at AADL," *The Michigan Daily*, February 4, 2026.

Yeji Kim, "'Community and initiative': A history of Yale's Korean Studies," *Yale Daily News*, April 28, 2022.

Elizabeth Shim "South Korea's approach to secretive church could backfire, analyst says," *UPI*, March 5, 2020.

PROFESSIONAL & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Publication Production, Editing, Reviewing, and Assistance

Peer reviewer of manuscripts for: Brill; *Religion Compass*; *Politics, Religion & Ideology*; *Database of Religious History*; *Yale Undergraduate Research Journal*

Korean romanization editing, for Gloria I-Ling Chien on "Teaching the Korean Film *Along with the Gods* and Analysing the Text that Combines the *Shousheng jing* and the *Shiwang jing*," 2024

Indexing and additional proofreading, for Jolyon Thomas on *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan*, 2019

Editor-in-Chief (2016–2017) and Associate Editor (2014–2016), *Penn Asian Review*

Event & Panel Organization and Management

Panel organizer, "K-pop, Demon Hunters, and Beyond: Korean Religion and Popular Culture," American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 2026

Panel organizer, "Religion, Culture, and Media in Korea," Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, March 2026

Panel organizer, "Religion and Marginality in Korea," American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 2024

Symposium co-organizer, "Moral Cultivation in the Premodern World: Craft and Transformation in Later Stoics, the *Zhuangzi*, and Zen," Yale University, April 2024

Event & Panel Organization and Management **(continued)**

Panel co-organizer, "Religion and Cold War in East Asia," AAS-in-Asia Conference, Kyungpook University, June 2023

Panel organizer, "Nation, Religion, and Society in Modern Korea," New England Association for Asian Studies Conference, Harvard University, December 2021

Panel organizer, "COVID-19 in Japan and Korea: Disability, Religion, and Political Change," New England Association for Asian Studies Conference, University of Vermont, December 2020

MC and panel chair, 5th Yale-Ewha Conference, Yale University, October 2019

Panel organizer and chair, "Colonialism, Christianization, and Community: Understanding Transnational Interactions in 20th Century Korea," 47th Annual Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies Conference, November 2018

Conference organizing chair, "Bodies and Borders: Inclusion, Exclusion, and Excision in East Asia," East Asian Languages and Civilizations Graduate Student Conference, University of Pennsylvania, April 2018

Conference organizing committee, "Structure & Subordination: Law, Science, and Religion in East Asia," East Asian Languages and Civilizations Graduate Student Conference, University of Pennsylvania, April 2017

"Missiles, Nukes, Markets, Madman?: North Korea in 2016" North Korea Roundtable, University of Pennsylvania, October 2016

Mentoring and Advising

Postdoc mentor for NCKS Graduate Fellows, University of Michigan, 2025–2026

Ambassador, Service to School, 2021–present

Mentor for Army ROTC cadets, VetMil Mentorship Program, Yale University, 2024

Project Tutor (Korean), East Asian Studies Senior Project Language Support Program, Yale University, 2021–2025

Divinity Doctoral Studies Liaison, Yale University, 2020–2021

Graduate Advisor, THINK at Yale, Yale University, 2019–2025

Organizational Leadership

Co-coordinator, Global Philosophy Reading Group, Yale University, 2023–2025

Co-coordinator, Korean Studies Reading Group, Yale University, 2022–2024

Chair, East Asian Languages and Civilizations Graduate Student Research Colloquium, University of Pennsylvania, 2017–2018

President, University of Pennsylvania Student Veteran Association, 2017–2018

Founder and President, Penn East Asian Studies Student Association, 2016–2017

Editor-in-Chief, Penn Asian Review, University of Pennsylvania, 2016–2017

Hiring and Admissions

Search committee for Professor of Japanese Religions, Department of Religious Studies, Yale University, 2023–2024

Professional Organization Memberships

Association for Asian Studies (AAS)

American Academy of Religion (AAR)

Chosŏn History Society (CHS)

Other Service

Facilitator, Accessibility Mapping Project (AMP), University of Pennsylvania, 2018–2019

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research in Gaihozu: Japanese Imperial Maps collection, Stanford University Library (remote, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2023) on colonial era religious sites in Korea

Archival research at United States National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, 2017) on records of United States military occupation of South Korea

Archival research at Presbyterian History Society (Philadelphia, 2017) on Presbyterian missionaries' departure from and return to Korea in 1940s

Research of Korean historical newspapers via Korea Integrated News Database System (KINDS), National Institute of Korean History, and Naver News Library (2017–2018, 2023–2024)

Field research on former Shinto shrine sites in South Korea (Seoul, 2017, 2019, 2023; Mokpo, 2017; Deagu, 2023)

Research of North Korean School Textbook Collection, Yale University Library (New Haven, 2021)

Research at National Library of Korea (Seoul, 2023), National Assembly Library (Seoul, 2023), National Museum of Korea Library (Seoul, 2023), Seoul National University Library (Seoul, 2023), and Academy of Korean Studies Library (Seongnam, 2023) on regulations and thought on religion in Korea in the colonial and occupation eras

AWARDS & HONORS (academic)

Graduate Student Paper Prize, NEAAS, 2020

Dean's Scholar, University of Pennsylvania, 2017

Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society, 2016

SALUTE Veterans National Honor Society (Alpha Tier), 2016

Dean's List, University of Pennsylvania, 2015, 2016, & 2017

AWARDS & HONORS (military)

Army Commendation Medal, U.S. Army, 2012

Army Achievement Medal, U.S. Army, 2008

Korea Defense Service Medal, U.S. Department of Defense, 2006

Army Good Conduct Medal (x3), U.S. Army, 2006, 2009, and 2012

Overseas Service Ribbon (x3), U.S. Army, 2008, 2010, and 2013

Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, U.S. Army, 2007

National Defense Service Medal, U.S. Department of Defense, 2003

Joint Meritorious Unit Award, U.S. Department of Defense, 2010

Award for Linguistic Excellence, 501st MI BDE, U.S. Army, 2012

Distinguished Top Graduate, Military Analyst Course, U.S. Army, 2009

Commandant's List, Basic Leader Course, U.S. Army, 2007

Certificate of Achievement, U.S Army, 2010

AETC Commander's Award, U.S. Air Force Air Education and Training Command, 2009

Base Junior Enlisted Member of the Quarter, Al Udeid AB, 2009

Airman of the Quarter, Combined Air and Space Operations Center, Al Udeid AB, 2009

Junior Enlisted of the Quarter, ISR Division, CAOC, Al Udeid AB, 2009

Commander's/Unit Coins of Excellence (x10), U.S. Army, 2005–2012

Unit Coin of Excellence, U.S. Navy, 2008

Commander's Coin of Excellence, Republic of Korea Defense Intelligence Agency, 2008

Commander's/Unit Coins of Excellence (x4), Republic of Korea Army, 2007–2008

Unit Coin of Excellence, Republic of Korea Navy, 2007

Commander's Coin of Excellence, Republic of Korea Marine Corps, 2008

LANGUAGES

English: native

Korean: advanced professional-level reading/writing/speaking; >6 years of formal education, >22 years' experience; Defense Language Proficiency Test, ILR Level 3

Japanese: intermediate to advanced reading/writing/speaking; >3 years education

German: elementary reading/speaking; 4 years education; AATG National German Exam

Chinese, Classical/Literary: basic reading

Chinese, Mandarin: beginner reading/speaking

ADDITIONAL SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, & HOBBIES

Familiarity and experience with research databases and tools, including Tropy

Library and information systems and standards including OCLC, MARC 21, and Alma

Mapping and geospatial analysis and research tools and experience including formal training in map reading, ArcGIS, Google Earth, land navigation, and imagery analysis

Experienced with Canvas as an instructor

Photography, using DSLR and phone cameras

Artistic and leisure activities related to Asian Studies including calligraphy (Korean, Chinese, and Japanese), go/baduk (15 kyu), janggi (Korean chess), and mahjong