Dr. Jamyung Choi's current research explores the rise of a middle class through the lens of Tokyo Imperial University, the top state-managed school in modern Japan. Scholars and journalists contentiously debate widening inequality and a crisis of the middle class in contemporary Japan. At the base of this alarm is an enduring faith in the middle class as the supporter of an egalitarian, democratic, and affluent polity. This presentation, as part of his book project based on his dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania (2014), challenges this myth by looking at the formation and persistence of Tokyo Imperial University’s top status in Japan. Choi argues that people’s aspirations for better social positions constantly endorsed and strengthened hierarchy among universities as well as between the educated and the undereducated, creating indelible fault lines within the ranks of the middle class. By adding Japan’s educational experience to the largely Western-centric discussion of the middle class, he demonstrates how inequalities became embedded in the formation of this social class.