

Syllabus (2024-Summer)

Course Title	Contemporary Issues in Korean Culture	Course No.	
Credit	3 credits	Hours	45 Hours
Class Time Classroom	Mon to Thr Classroom TBA		
Instructor	Dr. Alex Nelson	Department of Anthropology	
	E-mail: nelsonaj@uindy.edu	Phone: 1-702-235-2477	
Office Hours Office Location	TBA		

I. Course Overview

1. Course Description

This course examines important issues in contemporary Korean culture from an anthropological perspective. The two primary themes of the course explore social tensions and cultural shifts related to socioeconomic status and gender. The first week of the course will examine Koreans' experiences and concerns regarding education, housing, and work, the central markers of class status in Korean culture. The second week of the course explores key social tensions related to gender and sexuality, including mandatory military service, feminist and anti-feminist movements, gender inequality, marriage and fertility decline, and the experiences of gender and sexual minorities. The third week of the course examines shifting technological influences on Korean society, including mass media, issues of migration and multiculturalism, the proliferation of new religious movements (commonly and pejoratively referred to as "cults") and emerging issues in North Korean culture. We will explore these subjects through discussion of ethnographic research, films, guest speakers, field observations, and interviews that each student will conduct with Korean peers on one of the issues covered by the course. These interviews will be the focus of students' final papers and provide students an opportunity to connect and complicate what they have learned by engaging directly with the experiences and perspectives of Koreans themselves.

2. Prerequisites

None

3. Course Format

Lecture	Discussion/Presentation	Experiment/Practicum	Field Study	Other
35%	35%	10%	20%	NA

4. Course Objectives

- To practice examining the ways in which cultural constructions of gender and class shape human behavior and are reproduced and challenged through human behavior, particularly within the cultural context of Korea, past and present.
- To develop a culturally relativistic understanding of the cultural similarities and differences between our own cultural worldview and those in South Korea, particularly as they pertain to gender, class, and Kinship.
- To understand how gender and class ideologies intersect and how these ideologies have changed over time in Korea.

- To design research questions, collect interview data and critically analyze primary data and media ethically and effectively.
- To develop critical reading, writing and discussion skills through in-class discussions and writing workshops.

5. Evaluation Systems

Relative evaluation Absolute evaluation (for Ewha International Summer College students only) Others

Midterm Exam	Final Exam	Quizzes	Presentation	Projects	Assignments	Participation	Others
NA	NA	20%	NA	25%	30%	25%	NA

5.1 Assignments and In-Class Activities

Attendance / In-class activities (25%) - Class meetings will involve a combination of lecture, discussion (small groups), guest speakers, field excursions where we will practice the research methods of participant observation and workshops to analyze and write up interview transcripts and share feedback on final papers. Students are expected to have completed the assigned reading prior to coming to each class.

Quizzes (20%) – Once each week students will take a short quiz (6-10 questions) about the readings and from the week. These quizzes are non-cumulative. Their purpose is to encourage students to complete the assigned readings and access comprehension. These quizzes will be pass-fail. Students who score less than 67% on a quiz may be asked to give a short presentation on a reading for the following week or to submit a reading summary.

Interview Assignment (30%) – Students will design and conduct two interviews with Koreans on one or more of the topics in this course. Students will transcribe their interviews and learn how to analyze the transcripts (with the assistance of free software).

Final Paper (25%) – Students will write a 5-page final paper (12-point font, double-spaced). In the paper students will discuss how their interviewees' responses compared to the perspectives discussed in the class lectures, readings and by guest speakers. It is an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned to their own original data collection and analysis. The paper must cite at least two of the readings from class, discuss at least three direct quotes from the student's interview transcripts, and compare and contrast three findings from the interviews with what was discussed in the class readings and lectures.

II. Course Materials and Additional Readings

1. Required Materials

Note: All required readings will be provided as PDFs. All readings are individual chapters or articles from the list of supplemental materials. Maximum of one chapter/article per meeting.

2. Supplementary Materials

Yang, M-J. 2018. *From miracle to mirage: The making and unmaking of the Korean middle class, 1960-2015*. Cornell University Press.

Prentice, M. 2022. *Supercorporate: Distinction and participation in post-hierarchy South Korea*. Stanford University Press.

Koo, H. 2022. *Privilege and anxiety: The Korean middle class in the global era*. Cornell University Press.

Cho, S-M. 2022. Symbols and rituals on the grounds of queer culture festivals. *Korean Anthropology Review*, 6: 179-211.

Cho, J. 2009. The wedding banquet revisited: "Contract marriages" between Korean gays and lesbians. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 82(2): 401-422.

Lee, J-E., & Jeong, E-S. 2021. The 4-B movement: Envisioning a feminist future with/in a non-reproductive

future in Korea. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30: 633-644.

Cho, H-J. 2002. Living with conflicting subjectivities: Mother, motherly wife, and sexy woman in the transition from colonial-modern to postmodern Korea. In L. Kendall (Ed.), *Under construction: The gendering of modernity, class, and consumption in the Republic of Korea* (pp. 165–196). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Moon, S-S. 2002. The production and subversion of hegemonic masculinity: Reconfiguring gender hierarchy in contemporary South Korea. In L. Kendall (Ed.), *Under construction: The gendering of modernity, class, and consumption in the Republic of Korea* (pp. 79–114). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Lee, S. H. 2016. Beauty Between Empires: Global Feminism, Plastic Surgery, and the Trouble with Self-Esteem. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 37(1): 1–31.

Baldacchino, J-P, & Park, E-J. 2021. Between fantasy and realism: Gender, identification and desire among Korean viewers of second-wave Korean dramas. *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, 20: 285-309.

Ryang, S. 2000. Gender in Oblivion: Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). *Journal of Asian and African Studies*.

Han, S-M. 2023. Critique of Korean Multiculturalism as Viewed through Gendered Transnational Migration in Asia: The Case of Vietnamese Returnee Marriage Migrants. *Korean Anthropology Review*, 7: 69-101.

Introvigne, M. 2021. Killing the competition: Opposition to Shincheonji before and after the COVID-19 crisis. *Nova Religio*, 25(1): 14-39.

3. Optional Additional Readings

III. Course Schedule

Day	Date	Topics & Class Materials, Assignments
Day 1	(7/1)	Introduction to Anthropological Understandings of Culture and Research Methods.
Day 2	(7/2)	Korea's Education Fever and Examination Hell
Day 3	(7/3)	Housing, Status Anxiety, and the Precarity of Korea's Middle Class
Day 4	(7/4)	Transformations in Korean Workplaces and Status Competition [Quiz 1]
Day 5	(7/8)	Masculinity, Work, and Military Service in South Korea
Day 6	(7/9)	Femininity, Feminism and Gender Relations in South Korea
Day 7	(7/10)	Transformations in Korean Family Life
Day 8	(7/11)	LGBTQ Politics and Communities in South Korea [Quiz 2]
Day 9	(7/15)	Cosmetic Surgery, Popular Media & Technology **Interview Questions Due** [Interview Question Workshop]
Day 10	(7/16)	Immigration and Multiculturalism in Contemporary South Korea
Day 11	(7/17)	Korean "Cults" and New Religious Movements
Day 12	(7/18)	Contemporary Issues in North Korean Culture [Quiz 3]

Day	Date	Topics & Class Materials, Assignments
Day 13	(7/22)	Interview Analysis Workshop & Discussion **Interview Transcripts Due**
Day 14	(7/23)	Final Paper Workshop and Peer Review **Final Paper Draft Due**
Day 15	(7/24)	Informal Presentations & Discussion of Interview Papers **Revised Final Paper Due**
Makeup Classes 1	(mm/dd)	TBD
Makeup Classes 2	(mm/dd)	TBD

IV. Special Accommodations

* According to the University regulation section #57-3, students with disabilities can request for special accommodations related to attendance, lectures, assignments, or tests by contacting the course professor at the beginning of semester. Based on the nature of the students' request, students can receive support for such accommodations from the course professor or from the Support Center for Students with Disabilities (SCSD). Please refer to the below examples of the types of support available in the lectures, assignments, and evaluations.

Lecture	Assignments	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Visual impairment: braille, enlarged reading materials . Hearing impairment: note-taking assistant . Physical impairment : access to classroom, note-taking assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra days for submission, alternative assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Visual impairment: braille examination paper, examination with voice support, longer examination hours, note-taking assistant . Hearing impairment: written examination instead of oral examination . Physical impairment: longer examination hours, note-taking assistant

- Actual support may vary depending on the course.

* The contents of this syllabus are not final—they may be updated.