

DISS241-00: CONTEMPORARY KOREAN SOCIETY

Fall 2020

Division of International Studies

Korea University

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the main aspects of contemporary Korean society, including those pertaining to the family, industrialization, gender, aging, population, religion, and urbanization. The course will specifically focus on topics and issues that figure prominently in the lives of the Korean people, such as the continuing importance of Confucianism in Korean culture, rising divorce rates, gender inequality, education frenzy, the rise of Christianity, increasing ethnic diversity, *hallyu* (the Korean Wave), and urban problems. Each of these issues will be examined through sociological, historical, and comparative perspectives. The assigned readings include chapters from an introductory sociology textbook to enhance the students' understanding of the workings of society and to help broaden their perspective to appreciate the social institutions of other countries. Every effort will be made to make each session lively and engaging, so your active participation is extremely important and is a vital part of the course.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The principal objective of this course is to prepare students with the knowledge and analytical tools needed to develop balanced views on Korean society. Toward this end, students are expected to:

- understand the key dimensions and principal trends of Korean society;
- comprehend how class, race-ethnicity, gender, and age relate to social institutions such as the family, education, economy, religion, and politics;

- think globally, question commonly held beliefs, assess different perspectives used by sociologists, and to use this process to understand the forces that generate change and continuity in Korean society;
- understand how significant changes in society affect the experiences of diverse groups in Korea;
- understand various social problems facing Korean society, including inequality, sexism, and aging population.

III. REQUIRED READINGS

Kim, Andrew Eungi and Joonshik Choi. 2015. *Contemporary Korean Culture: The Persistence of Shamanistic and Confucian Values and Practices*. Seoul: Korea University Press.

Kim, Andrew Eungi, ed. 2018. *Korean Society: An Introduction*. Seoul: Korea University Press

*Both books are available at the Unistore on the basement floor of Center Square

IV. REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. Class Participation (10% of the final grade):

Class participation is a critical component of this course and it has two dimensions: class attendance and active participation in class discussions. While attendance record will not be taken into consideration for the final grade, it will be taken on a regular basis to be recorded on the transcript. The responsibility for having lively discussions rests on you, so it is everyone's responsibility to come to class prepared, i.e., completing the assigned readings and reflecting on the issues and arguments of the reading, and be willing to engage in discussion.

2. Midterm Exam (35% of the final grade)

Short- and long-essay questions.

3. Final Exam (35% of the final grade)

Noncumulative, comprising short- and long-essay questions.

4. Group Presentation (20% of the final grade)

Students will be randomly placed in groups of 3-4 students and each group is responsible for giving a presentation on any topic related to Korean culture and society. A prior consultation with, and a permission from, the instructor is required.

V. GRADING SCALE

A+	95-100	A	90-94		
B+	85-89	B	80-84		
C+	75-79	C	70-74		
D+	65-69	D	60-64	F	0-59

VI. CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENT

Week 1	Introduction
Week 2	Introduction to Culture Required Readings: None
Week 3	Korean Culture I: Persistence of Shamanistic Practices Required Readings: Kim and Choi (2015), Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 4 & 5.
Week 4	Korean Culture II: The World's Most Confucianized Culture Required Readings: Kim and Choi (2015), Chapters 3, 6-9.
Week 5	Contemporary Korean Culture: Change and Persistence Required Readings: None.
Week 6	Family: Role Changes & Trends in Marriage and Divorce Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapter 2
Week 7	Gender Inequality: Facts, Causes & Implications Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapters 3
Week 8	Midterm Exam
Week 9	Education Frenzy: Economic Burden & Psychological Stress Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapters 5 & 6
Week 10	Religion and Beliefs: Shamanism, Buddhism, & Christianity Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapters 7 & 8

Week 11	Aging of Korea: Demographic Time Bomb Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapter 9
Week 12	Multicultural Korea: Increasing Ethnic Diversity & Implications Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapter 10
Week 13	Hallyu: The Popularity of Korean Popular Culture Abroad Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapters 11 & 12
Week 14	Population and Urbanization Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapter 13
Week 15	Economic Development: Factors for the “Miracle of the <i>Han</i> River” Required Readings: Kim (2018), Chapter 14
Week 16	Final Exam