

# **SOC270 KOREAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

Winter 2010

Akita International University

Instructor: Professor Kim Eungi  
Class Time: Tuesday & Thursday: 9:00-11:45  
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## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to introduce students to the main aspects of traditional Korean culture and contemporary Korean society, including those pertaining to values, religion, the family, industrialization, gender, aging, and political system. The course will specifically focus on topics and issues that figure prominently in the lives of the Korean people, such as Confucian values, patriarchy, modernization, education frenzy, urbanization, authoritarianism, and anti-Americanism. Each of these issues will be examined through sociological, historical, comparative, and balanced perspectives.

## **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 culture and society. Toward this end, students are expected to:

- understand the main aspects of Korean culture, including its symbols, language, norms and values;
- comprehend the key dimensions and principal trends of Korean society;
- know how age, class, marital status, gender, and educational attainment 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; and
- understand various social problems facing Korean society, including inequality, sexism, and aging population.
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## **III. REQUIRED READINGS**

A reading packet

### **Recommended Readings**

- Alford, C. Fred. 1999. *Think No Evil: Korean Values in the Age of Globalization*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Breen, Michael. 1998. *The Koreans: Who They Are, What They Want, Where Their Future Lies*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Kendall, Laurel. 2002. *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Lie, John. 1998. *Han Unbound: The Political Economy of South Korea*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Oh, John Kie-Chiang. 1999. *Korean Politics: The Quest for Democratization and Economic Development*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

## **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. Students are invited to share their thoughts on the assigned readings and raise questions for class discussions. 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. Your participation will be evaluated in terms of both the frequency and quality of your presentation of ideas. Please remember to show respect to other students' opinions and be thoughtful of others' opportunities to participate.

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

Midterm exam will consist of short- and long-essay questions.

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

The format of the final exam is the same as that of midterm exam and is not cumulative.

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

Students will be divided into groups of 2-3 students, and each group is responsible for giving a 15-20 minute presentation on any aspect of Korean culture and society. In choosing the topic, prior consultations with and submissions of an outline to the

instructor are encouraged. A rationale for having a group project is based on the idea that interactions among students should also occur outside the classroom setting and that students should learn to cooperate and collaborate with other students, including the division of labor, and learn to coordinate the works of group members into a coherent whole.

## **V. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

**1. Class Attendance:** Attendance will be taken on a regular basis. Unexcused absences will result in a **5-10 point** reduction from your total points AND if you miss class more than four times, you will automatically receive “F” as the final grade.

**2. Classroom Expectations and Behavior:** You are responsible for knowing the material and announcements presented during lectures whether or not you attend class. Please arrange with another student to get missed notes and announcements. Please do not disrupt other students’ ability to hear lectures:

- a. Do not arrive late or leave early;
- b. Be prepared to take notes before lectures begin;
- c. Do not read or talk during lecture;
- d. Do not begin packing your belongings before class ends); and
- e. Do not doze off in class and NEVER rest your head on the table to sleep (if you really feel sleepy, step out of the classroom for a couple of minutes to do some stretch).

**3. Commitment to Learning:** There is no point in taking a course if you are not committed to learning. That means doing the readings, showing up in class, concentrating, and participating in class discussion and group activities. We will struggle through ideas and readings that are difficult and may seem boring if you do not yet understand them. I strive to make the class interesting, but it is your responsibility to be committed.

Also, I hope you reassess your priorities about learning and knowledge. Be open-minded about learning; try not to think about what you can get out of any course you take in view of job opportunities upon graduation. It is said that graduates with nonprofessional degrees, i.e., non-law, non-engineering, non-medicine, etc., undergo extensive training processes (up to two years) at their first place of employment. What this means is that companies are not too picky about what your majors are and how

much you know about particular disciplines; rather what they want are graduates who are well-rounded and those who are familiar with not only their major(s) but also with subjects—i.e., history, literature, religion, culture, etc.—that can enrich their knowledge, personality and character. In addition, companies prefer graduates who are mature, sincere, diligent, cooperative, and well-mannered over those who maybe bright but are ill-mannered and ill-suited to working in group settings. What you should remind yourself is that you are having the best time of your life right now and that you should just enjoy the learning process and the topics you are learning about.

## **VI. CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENT**

- January 12      What is Culture?**  
Required Readings:  
Kendall, Diana. Culture.
- January 14      Korean Values: Superstition, Shamanism & Confucianism**  
Required Readings:  
Moon, Sang-hi. Shamanism in Korea  
Koh, Byung-ik. Confucianism in Contemporary Korea.
- January 19      Is Korea a Christian Country?**  
Required Readings:  
Kim, Andrew. Protestantism in Korea and Japan from the 1880s to  
the 1940s: A Comparative Study of Differential Cultural  
Reception and Social Impact.  
Lee, Won-Gue. A Sociological Study on the Factors of Church  
Growth and Decline in Korea.
- January 21      Characteristics of Marriage and Family & Rise in Divorce Rates**  
Required Readings:  
Kweon, Sug-In. The Extended Family in Contemporary Korea
- January 26      The “Greying” of Korea: The Most Rapidly Aging Society in the  
World**  
Required Readings:  
Eun, Kisoo. Aging and Social Strategies for Aging Problems.
- January 28      Urbanization: Comparison Between Korea and the West**  
Required Readings: None
- February 2      Midterm Exam**
- February 4      Economy: Economic Development in Historical Perspective**

- Required Readings:  
Eckert, Carter et al. 1990. Economic Development in Historical Perspective, 1945-1990.
- February 9      Education Frenzy in Korea: Problems and Issues**
- Required Readings:  
Kim, Young-hwa. 2000. Concurrent Development of Education Policy and Industrialization Strategies in Korea (1945-95): A Historical Perspective.  
Kim, Sun-woong and Lee Ju-ho. 2002. Promoting Innovation: The Role of Education.
- February 11     Anti-Americanism: Real or Imagined?**
- Required Readings:  
Gweon, Yong-Lib. The Changing Perception of America in South Korea.  
Lee, Sook-jong. Anti-Americanism in Korean Society: A Survey-based Analysis.
- February 16     Multiethnic Korea: The Rise in the Number of Foreigners**
- Required Readings:  
Kim, Eungi. Global Migration and South Korea.
- February 18     Politics: The Korean War and North Korea**
- Required Readings:  
Eckert, Carter et al. 1990. Authoritarianism and Protest, 1948-1990.  
Ahn, Chung-si. Economic Dimensions of Democratization in South Korea.
- February 23     Hallyu (The Korean Wave): Are Korean Dramas, Movies, and Singers Still Popular?**
- Required Readings:  
Shim, Doobo. Hybridity and the Rise of Korean Popular Culture in Asia.  
Cho, Hae-Joang. Reading the Korean Wave as a Sign of Global Shift.  
(Note: A film will be shown)
- February 25     Group Presentation**
- March 2         Group Presentation**
- March 4         Final Exam**