

# **DISS264 RETHINKING KOREAN CULTURE**

Spring 2012

Division of International Studies

Korea University

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## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will examine Korean culture from anthropological, psychological, religious and sociological perspectives in order to better understand modern manifestations of Korean cultural patterns. The course will specifically focus on the impact of two religious traditions, namely Shamanism and Confucianism, on the mental landscape and social patterns of Koreans. Accordingly, the topics covered in this course include filial piety, ancestor worship, patriarchy, son-preference, family norms, this-worldly orientation, collectivism, and sports.

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

- understand the main aspects of Korean culture;
- question commonly held beliefs, assess different perspectives used by sociologists and anthropologists, and to use this process to understand the forces that generate change and continuity in Korean culture and society;
- understand how significant changes in culture affect the experiences of diverse groups in Korea;
- identify the significant social institutions involved in the shaping of contemporary Korean culture and assess their contribution;
- comprehend how class, race-ethnicity, gender, and age relate to socio-cultural institutions such as the family, education, and religion; and

- understand various cultural problems facing Korean society, including son preference, sexism, and a rising divorce rate.

### III. REQUIRED READINGS

Harris, Marvin. 1974. *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches*. New York: Vintage.

A reading packet (available from a nearby photocopying center)

#### 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.

Amsden, Alice. 1989. *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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.

Armstrong, Charles. 2002. *Korean Society: Civil Society, Democracy and the State*. New York: Routledge.

Oh, John Kie-Chiang. 1999. *Korean Politics: The Quest for Democratization and Economic Development*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

### IV. REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

This course is built around two principles: that a little work done each week makes for a better and ultimately more satisfying learning experience than the typical class format with midterm and final exams; and that building verbal and analytical (writing) skills as well as developing a habit of critical thinking is as important as accumulating knowledge.

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

Class participation is a critical component of this course and it has four dimensions: class attendance, active participation in class discussions, giving presentations on weekly readings, and completing weekly journal. 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 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 (30% of the final grade)**

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

## **3. Final Exam (30% 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 3-4 students, and each group is responsible for giving a 20-minute presentation on any aspect of Korean society. 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.

## **5. Personal Essay (10% of the final grade)**

For the personal essay assignment, students can write a 5-page (double spaced) essay on any aspect of Korean society and culture. For this assignment, you just write about how your perceptions of a particular aspect of Korean society and culture have changed by reading the course materials, listening to lectures and engaging in class discussions. The deadline: TBA.

# **VI. CLASS SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS**

## **Week 1            What is Culture? I**

Required Readings:

Macionis, John. Culture.

Harris, Marvin. 1974. *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches*. New York: Vintage, pp. 1-130.

- Week 2**            **What is Culture? II**  
 Required Readings:  
 Harris, Marvin. 1974. *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches*. New York:  
                                  *Vintage*, pp. 133-266.
- Week 3**            **Korean Shamanism**  
 Required Readings:  
 Special issue on Korean Shamanism in *Koreana* (Vol. 6 No. 2, Summer  
                                  1992), pp. 6-48.  
 Lee, Jonghyun. Shamanism and Its Emancipatory Power for Korean  
                                  Women.  
 Cho, Hung-youn. Cultural Interbreeding between Korean Shamanism  
                                  and Imported Religions.
- Week 4**            **Confucianism**  
 Required Readings:  
 Koh, Byung-ik. Confucianism in Contemporary Korea.  
 Lee, Tan Soo. Influences of Confucianism on Korean Corporate  
                                  Culture
- Week 5**            **Korean Culture: Symbols & Language**  
 Required Readings:  
 None.
- Week 6**            **Korean Culture: Norms and Values**  
 Required Readings:  
 None.
- Week 7**            **Culture of Son-Preference**  
 Required Readings:  
 Cha, Jae-ho et al. Boy Preference Reflected in Korean Folklore.  
 Chun, Heeran and Monica Das Gupta. Gender discrimination in sex  
                                  selective abortions and its transition in South Korea.
- Week 8**            **Midterm Exam**
- Week 9**            **Religious Culture in Korea**  
 Required Readings:  
 Kim, Andrew. Characteristics of Religious Life in South Korea.  
 Kim, Andrew. Nonofficial Religion in South Korea.  
 Kim, Andrew. Religious Influences on Personal and Societal Well-

Being.

**Week 10**

**Christianity in Korea**

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.

**Week 11**

**Globalization of Culture and Korean Culture**

Required Readings:

Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. Globalization and Culture: Three Paradigms.

Ryoo, Woongjae. Globalization, or the logic of cultural hybridization: the case of the Korean wave

**Week 12**

**The Korean Wave**

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.

**Week 13**

**Group Presentations**

**Week 14**

**Group Presentations**

**Week 15**

**Group Presentations**

**Week 16**

**Final Exam**