Gender in South Korea Summer 2016

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Course Description
What is “gender,” how is it constructed, and what impacts does it have on social identities, relations and institutions in South Korean society, both historically and currently? This course examines debates about femininity and masculinity and how they are often reduced to binaries of ‘appropriate’ vs. ‘deviant,’ ‘traditional’ vs. ‘modern’ and ‘sexist’ vs. ‘egalitarian.’ Critiquing these narrow framings, this course seeks to examine the broad range of gender and sexual identities, the conditions that shape them, and how they have changed over the last century in South Korea. Specific topics will include: historical concepts such as ‘filial piety’ and ‘new women’ which have shaped women’s position in Korean society; the conscription of “comfort women” under Japanese colonial rule; constructions of femininity and masculinity; struggles over work and family responsibilities; gendered nationalism and social welfare policies; impacts of militarization; reproductive politics; adoption; GLBTQ communities; representations of gender in K-pop and Hallyu; and South Korean feminist movements and scholarship.

Course Goals
• Understand how gender has shaped Korean society historically and in the present
• Learn key concepts and debates in women, gender and sexuality studies and awareness of the ways gender is constructed in society
• Develop analytical skills to express both verbal and written arguments
• Understand how gender operates in your own life and develop strategies for social change

Course Structure
Classes will include combinations of lectures, films, and discussions. Students will sign up to write short response papers to different readings (2-3 paragraphs) which they will submit to the instructor before class and then present to the class for discussion. They will also respond to each other’s papers with constructive feedback and questions for further inquiry. Active class participation is required and will make the course more engaging and meaningful. Please come to class prepared, having read carefully and thought about questions regarding the assigned readings for that day.

Course Requirements & Grade Distribution
Class Attendance, Participation, Short Homework Assignments 25%
Response Papers and In-class Presentation 25%
Take-home Midterm 25%
Final 25%
Course Policy

• **Plagiarism**: Follow proper citation practices, making sure to give credit to ideas which are not your own.

• **Assignments**: All reading and written assignments are required and should be completed before class. Late assignments will be deducted a half letter grade for each late day (i.e. A to A-, B+ to B, etc…).

• **Attendance**: Regular class attendance and active participation are required. If you need to miss a class, you must let the instructor know ahead of time, or if you are sick and cannot attend, let me know immediately afterwards. Documentation for excused absences is expected. If you miss class for any reason, you are still expected to make up the work. Unexcused absences will penalize your grade.

• **Devices**: Please turn off communication devices during class. Laptops may be used only to take notes.

• **Disabilities**: Students with disabilities who need accommodations should let me know and we can discuss how best to support you.

• **Course updates**: I may update or change the syllabus and it is the responsibility of each student to keep up to date on announcements made in class or on email.

Required Texts
PDFs of readings will be distributed or will be available for download on-line from Google drive

Recommended Texts


Class Schedule

(subject to revision, supplemental readings may be announced)

*Most days have one analytical reading and one news or internet article – you are meant to read these critically, please come prepared to discuss and question*

Week 1: Introductions and Overview

*Thursday, July 14* – What is this class about? What do you hope to learn? How can we work together to create a productive, vibrant, supportive learning community?

Week 2: Understanding Gender in South Korea: Theories and Issues
Monday, July 18  What is gender? Why does it matter in the South Korean context?
- “The woman who liberated South Korean housewives”

Tuesday, July 19 Women’s Studies, Feminist Pedagogy and Activism in South Korea
- Women and Gender Studies in South Korea
  http://koreanstudies.com/17_women.html

Wednesday, July 20 Asian Feminist Critiques of Western Feminism

Optional

Thursday, July 21 Constructing Femininity and Masculinity in South Korea
- Elaine H. Kim, “Men’s Talk: A Korean American View of South Korean Constructions of Women, Gender, and Masculinity,” in Dangerous Women (p. 67-118)

Week 3: Gendered History of South Korea: War, Militarization, Labor, Modernization and Social Change Movements

Monday July 25 “New Woman” in South Korea

Tuesday July 26 Modern Korean Women’s Writing
• “Even after winning acclaim, poet struggles with gender label”  
  http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2603000000.html?cid=AEN20121220006000315

**Wed July 27** Militarized Modernity
  • “One elderly woman says she indeed suffered “forced labor” in Japan” July 9, 2015 http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/699553.html
  • Film: *The Women Outside: Korean Women and the US Military*

**Thursday, July 28** Development and Feminist Politics

**Week 4: Gender in Contemporary South Korean Society: Culture, Work, Family, Sexuality**

**Monday August 1** Reproductive Politics, Migration and Citizenship

**Tuesday Aug 2** Single Mothers, Social Welfare, and Adoption
  • Sang-hun Choe, “Group Resists Korean Stigma for Unwed Mothers”  

**Wednesday August 3** Gendered Critiques of K-Pop
  • “Psy And The Acceptable Asian Man” posted on *Racialicious*  

**Thursday Aug 4** Sexual Politics

Aug 8-10 Students Presentations and Final Papers due

Prof. Miliann Kang’s Bio

Miliann Kang is Associate Professor in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she is also affiliated faculty in Sociology and Asian/Asian American Studies. Her book, The Managed Hand: Race, Gender and the Body in Beauty Service Work (2010, University of California Press) addresses gendered processes and relations in immigrant women’s work focusing on Asian-owned nail salons. It won four awards from the American Sociological Association and the Sara Whaley book prize from the National Women’s Studies Association. She is currently researching work-family issues for Asian American women, and the racial politics of mothering. She received her Ph.D. from New York University and her B.A. magna cum laude from Harvard University. She has also published creative writing in The Huffington Post, Women’s Review of Books, Meridians and Daily Hampshire Gazette.

Sample Readings