

International Summer Program (ISP) at Konkuk University

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South Korean Politics and Foreign Policy

Course Description

The course is structured to foster a comprehensive understanding of South Korea's political evolution, economic development, societal changes, and cultural impacts on the global stage. Students will engage with the challenges and opportunities facing South Korea today, including inter-Korean relations, security concerns, and its strategic role amid rising global tensions and alliances.

With a focus on active learning, the course will primarily utilize a variety of instructional methods, including discussions, research essays, and group presentations, to encourage critical thinking and deepen students' understanding of the subject matter. This accelerated course is designed not only for students interested in East Asian studies, international relations, and global politics but also for those seeking to gain insights into the factors driving the rapid transformation of one of the world's most fascinating countries.

This intensive four-week course delves into the dynamic and complex world of South Korean politics and foreign policy, offering students an in-depth analysis of the nation's journey from the turmoil of the Korean War to its current status as a global economic powerhouse and a key player in international diplomacy. Through a blend of historical insights, political theory, and contemporary case studies, students will explore the critical events, policies, and figures that have shaped South Korea's domestic and international landscape.

Course Objectives

- Understand the historical developments of South Korean politics.
- Analyze South Korea's foreign policy strategies and its relations with key global players.

- Explore the socio-political and economic factors influencing South Korean domestic and foreign policy.
- Critically evaluate South Korea's role and strategies in international organizations and multilateral agreements.

Requirements

Students are required to attend each class and to read the syllabus selections assigned for each class session on time. Students are also responsible for ALL readings on the syllabus, regardless of whether or not we cover all of the assigned readings.

Students are encouraged to raise important issues in class and to make comments on the readings. Class participation will be worth 20 % of your overall grade. Students will also be given two mid-term essays and group presentations as the final exam. The midterm essays will be take-home and the group presentations will be in-class. The mid-term essays are worth 40% and presentations are also worth 40% of your overall grade. The essay prompts will require students to be able to assess and critique the various arguments presented by the authors.

Course Format and Schedule

- Duration: 4 Weeks
- Sessions: 12 Sessions (~3 sessions per week)
- Session Length: 3 hours each

Course Breakdown

Historical Foundations and Political Evolution

- Session 1: Introduction to South Korea; Pre-war history and culture
- Session 2: The Korean War and Its Aftermath
- Session 3: Political Development and the Path to Democracy

Economic Development and Social Dynamics

- Session 4: The Economic Miracle on the Han River
- Session 5: Social Changes and Cultural Identity
- Session 6: Challenges in South Korean Society

Inter-Korean Relations and Security Challenges

- Session 7: Inter-Korean Relations: History and Major Agreements
- Session 8: The North Korean Threat and Regional Security Dynamics
- Session 9: South Korea's Defense Policy and Military Strategy

Foreign Policy and South Korea's Global Role

- Session 10: South Korea's Foreign Policy Framework
- Session 11: South Korea on the Global Stage
- Session 12: Future Challenges and Prospects for South Korea

Reading List

Historical Foundations and Political Evolution

- Session 1-3 Readings:
 - Don Oberdorfer and Robert Carlin, "The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History" (Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2)
 - Katharine H.S. Moon, "Protesting America: Democracy and the U.S.-Korea Alliance" (Introduction, Chapter 1)

Economic Development and Social Dynamics

- Session 4-6 Readings:
 - Eun Mee Kim, "Big Business, Strong State: Collusion and Conflict in South Korean Development, 1960–1990" (Introduction, Chapter 3)
 - Kyung Hyun Kim, "Virtual Hallyu: Korean Cinema of the Global Era" (Chapter 1)

Inter-Korean Relations and Security Challenges

- Session 7-9 Readings:
 - Scott Snyder, "South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers" (Chapter 7)
 - Victor D. Cha, "The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future" (Chapter 6)

Foreign Policy and South Korea's Global Role

- Session 10-12 Readings:
 - Chung-in Moon and Seung-Chan Boo, "South Korea's Soft Power Diplomacy: Resources, Strategy, and Impact" (Journal Article)
 - Mark Manyin et al., "South Korea: Background and U.S. Relations" (Congressional Research Service Report)

Assignments and Evaluation

- Participation (20%)
- Research Paper 1: Analysis of a significant event in South Korean politics (20%)
- Research Paper 2: Comparative study of South Korea's foreign policy with another country (20%)
- Group Presentation (40%)