

EALC/GSWS7471: Gender and Sexuality in Korea

Fall 2023 | T 12pm-3pm | Fisher-Bennett Hall 17

Prof. So-Rim Lee (sorimlee@sas.upenn.edu)

Office hours: W 1pm-3pm by appointment (Williams 806)



How have gender and sexuality been historically constructed and shifted in modern and contemporary Korea? How did terms like “new woman,” “t’ibu,” or “soybean paste girl” enter the popular discourse at different points of its capitalist modernity? This graduate seminar investigates gender/sexuality at large in relation to heteropatriarchal kinship system, ableist national biopolitics, and normative citizenship on the Korean peninsula from late Chosŏn to current times. Moving through the eras of Japanese occupation, the Korean War and division, developmental dictatorships, to the current millennia, we focus on the critical role that gender and sexuality played—and continue to play—in the political, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of nation-building,

democratization, and neoliberalization that shaped the contemporary Korean societies. In this discussion-based seminar, we will read a broad range of secondary sources and explore different methods in interdisciplinary Korean studies including historiography, feminist cultural anthropology, queer and crip theories, among others.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify how gender and sexuality in Korea have been historically constructed.
- Interpret the key concepts, theories, and debates pertinent to the construction of gender and sexuality and/within intersecting systems of race, class, ableism, among others.
- Generate informed insights and opinions on the texts and synthesize findings into a well-argued essay in a coherent and persuasive manner.

Assessment

Attendance and participation	20%
Weekly reading leads	30%
Midterm check-in	20%
Final portfolio	30%

Required Readings

Grace M. Cho, *Tastes Like War: A Memoir* (The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2021)

Cho Nam-Joo, *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982: A Novel*, trans. Jamie Chang (2020)

All other readings will be uploaded on Canvas or available online.

Grading Rubric

To achieve the desired grade, you must complete the following:

For an A grade, you must complete your weekly reading leads, the reading journal (at least 5 entries by midterm check-in), and the final portfolio (final essay and reading journal, at least 11 entries by the end of term) on time.

For a B grade, you must complete your weekly reading leads, the reading journal (at least 3 entries by midterm check-in), and the final portfolio (final essay and reading journal, at least 9 entries by the end of term) on time.

For a C grade, you must complete your weekly reading leads, the reading journal (at least 2 entries by midterm check-in), and the final portfolio (final essay and reading journal, at least 7 entries by the end of term) on time.

To pass the course, you must complete your weekly reading leads, the reading journal (at least 1 entry by midterm check-in), and the final portfolio (final essay and reading journal, at least 5 entries by the end of term) on time.

Assignments

1. Attendance and participation (20%)

You are expected to demonstrate consistent, active participation in every class. You must notify me in advance regarding any absence. I understand that illness or any other difficulties may arise, so please communicate by email. More than three unannounced absences in class will result in an F. Laptops, tablets, and electronic reading devices are permitted in class for the sole purpose of consulting class materials or taking notes. Use of cell phones, e-mail, internet, texting, and any work related to other classes are not permitted.

2. Weekly reading leads (30%)

A major goal of any graduate-level course is to learn how to read and formulate your own thoughts from the readings. Each week, you will be asked to “lead” the class into one of the readings—the format is up to you, but you may introduce the author, briefly annotate the major points of the reading, and pose open-ended questions for the class. The goal is not to present something encyclopedic or conclusive on the reading, but to facilitate an open discussion so that we can think aloud together.

3. Midterm check-in (20%)

You are to keep a weekly reading journal throughout the course of this semester, which will include your own reflections and responses to the readings and discussions every week. This can

be done in the format of an online blog, Microsoft Word doc, a handwritten notebook, an audio-visual file, or some combination of all of these. While the reading journal can take any form, it must demonstrate your attempt to engage closely with that week's texts, which may include critical or personal reflection. You're more than welcome to use the weekly reading lead opportunities as written entries in the journal. **Submit in class on October 17.**

4. Final portfolio (30%)

Submit a final portfolio consisting of an essay and the reading journal. The essay should be conceived in consultation with the instructor, and take the format of a conference paper (12 pages max double-spaced, Times New Roman, font 12) using the key themes, concepts, and strategies we discussed in this course to make a compelling argument about a significant topic. Along with it, also submit a final complete collection of your Reading journal. **Due 8PM EST December 20.**

5. Extra points!

There are three opportunities for extra points in this course, which is to attend the one-hour lunch colloquia at the James Joo-Jin Kim Center for Korean Studies. Lunch will be served.

When: 12pm-1pm

Where: 3600 Market Street, Suite 310

October 19: Jisoo Kim (Associate Prof of History, George Washington)

November 16: Hosu Kim (Associate Prof of Sociology, CUNY Staten Island)

November 30: Eleana Kim (Prof of Anthropology, UC Irvine): "The Korean DMZ as an Impossible Space: Reflections on Peace Beyond Geopolitics"

Writing and Presentation Resources and Assistance

The Marks Family Writing Center works with students on writing assignments. Consider arranging a meeting with the resident writing tutor for free one-on-one sessions to brainstorm ideas or learn strategies to draft, revise, or improve the structure of the academic essay.

<http://writing.upenn.edu/critical/wc/>

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to comply with the University's regulations on academic integrity. If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak to me before an assignment is due and/or examine the University website. Academic dishonesty includes and is not limited to: cheating on an exam (e.g., copying others' answers, using a crib sheet) or plagiarism of a paper or exercise (e.g., taking material from readings without citation, copying another student's work). Failure to maintain academic integrity on an assignment will result in a loss of credit for

that assignment—at a minimum. Other penalties may also apply.

<https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>

Weingarten Center

An invaluable place for learning resources, tutoring, and disability services. Especially those who may need academic accommodation for documented or undocumented disability that may impact learning or participating in the course are strongly encouraged to initiate request service in advance through the Weingarten Center located on 220 South 40th Street, Suite 260 (Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm, 215-573-9235, vpul-sds@mail.pobox.upenn.edu). Contact them as soon as possible to best assess your situation and provide reasonable accommodation in the current semester. <https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/index.php>

Important Note on Inclusiveness

This course involves participation from students of diverse experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives of the world. We will treat the classroom as a brave space where students can be present, acknowledge one another's differences of race, gender, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, nationalities, and develop critical thinking through honest, courageous conversations. Discussions in this class will focus on developing skills on making constructive criticism and comments that use factual statements free from prejudices. When expressing personal ideas and opinions, students should always navigate the boundaries between potential harassment of peers and academic freedom. Should you, at any point during the semester, experience any discomfort or disagreement from interactions that take place in the class, please come talk to me. If you encounter sexual harassment, misconduct, assault, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability, please contact the Title IX Coordinator and Executive Director Sam Starks (sstarks@upenn.edu). If you report this to a faculty or staff member, they must notify the Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may request confidentiality from the University).

COURSE SCHEDULE

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”

- Audre Lorde

Week 1. August 29: Introduction

Sandra Harding, “Is there a Feminist Method?” *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1-14.

Optional: Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988): 519-31.

Week 2. September 5: Colonial Modernity and the “New Woman”

Theodore Jun Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910-1945* (UC Press, 2014). Introduction, Chaps 1 and 2 (60 pages)

Week 3. September 12: “Comfort Women”

In-class screening (excerpts): *Shusenjo*, dir. Miki Dezaki (2019)

Pyong Gap Min, “Korean ‘Comfort Women’: The Intersection of Colonial Power, Gender and Class.” *Gender and Society* 6 (2003): 938-57.

Maki Kimura, “Narrative as a Site of Subject Construction: The ‘Comfort Women’ Debate.” *Feminist Theory* 9.1 (2008): 5-24.

Week 4. September 19: Camptowns and “Western Princesses”

Grace M. Cho, *Tastes Like War: A Memoir* (The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2021).

Grace M. Cho, “Diaspora of Camptown: The Forgotten War’s Monstrous Family.” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 34.1/2 (2006): 309-31.

Sooyoung Kim, “Staying Backward with the History of Camptown Trans Sex Work.” *TSQ : Transgender Studies Quarterly* 10.1 (2023): 23-27.

Week 5. September 26: Transnational Adoption

Eleana Kim, *Adopted Territory: Transnational Korean Adoptees and the Politics of Belonging* (Duke University Press, 2010), Introduction and Chap. 1 (75 pages)

Week 6. October 3: Militarized Modernity and Nation-building

Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea* (Duke University Press, 2005), Introduction, Chaps 1 and 2 (67 pages)

Week 7. October 10: Multiple Sites of Womanhood

Hyaeweol Choi, “Wise Mother, Good Wife: A Transcultural Discursive Construct in Modern Korea.” *Journal of Korean Studies* 14.1 (2009): 1-34.

Cho Haejoang, “Living with Conflicting Subjectivities: Mother, Motherly Wife, and Sexy Woman in the Transition from Colonial-Modern to Postmodern Korea.” In *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea* (University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 165-95.

Nancy Abelmann, "Women, Mobility, and Desire: Narrating Class and Gender in South Korea." In *Under Construction*, 25-53.

Week 8. October 17: Feminism in Ordinary Life (Reading journals due in class)

Cho Nam-Joo, *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982: A Novel*, trans. Jamie Chang (2020)

Edward White, "Cho Nam-joo: The novelist inspiring East Asia's #MeToo movement," *Financial Times* January 17, 2020.

<https://www.ft.com/content/4ea79450-2262-11ea-b8a1-584213ee7b2b>

Sohn Hee Jeong, "Feminism Reboot: Korean Cinema Under Neoliberalism in the 21st Century," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 12.2 (2020): 98-109.

Weeks 9. October 19: Dismantling Ableism

Eunjung Kim, *Curative Violence: Rehabilitating Disability, Gender, and Sexuality in Modern Korea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 1-41.

Mel Y. Chen, Alison Kafer, Eunjung Kim, and Julie Avril Minich, "Introduction: Crip Genealogies," in *Crip Genealogies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2023), excerpts (read 1-48).

Week 10. October 31: Queer Survivals within the Heteronormative Nation and Time

Tari Young-Jung Na, Ju Hui Judy Han, Se-Woong Koo, "The South Korean Gender System: LGBTI in the Contexts of Family, Legal Identity, and the Military." *Journal of Korean Studies* 19.2 (2014): 357-77.

Layoung Shin, "Avoiding T'ibu (Obvious Butchness): Invisibility as a Survival Strategy among Young Queer Women in South Korea." *Queer Korea* (Duke University Press, 2020), 295-322.

Raymond Kyoojung Ra, "Discovery of the [Queer] Minjung Tradition: The Sinchon Station IDAHOBIT Billboard Vandalism and Queer Korean Politics of Visibility." *International Journal of Korean History* 28.1 (2023): 1-32.

Week 11. November 7: Beauty and (Bio)Power

S. Heijin Lee, "Beauty between Empires: Global Feminisms, Plastic Surgery, and the Trouble with Self-Esteem," in Lee, S. Heijin, Christina H. Moon, and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, eds. *Fashion and Beauty in the Time of Asia*. New York: New York University Press, 2019): 69-102.

So-Rim Lee, "When Neoliberalism and Patriarchy Conspire: Plastic Surgery in the South Korean Reality TV Show Let Me In." *TDR: The Drama Review* 64.2 (2020): 101-16.

Mimi Thi Nguyen, "The Biopower of Beauty: Humanitarianism, Imperialism and Global Feminisms in an Age of Terror." *Signs* 36 (2011): 359-83.

Week 12. November 14: Contemporary Feminisms and Backlash

Jee Eun Regina Song, "The Soybean Paste Girl: The Cultural and Gender Politics of Coffee Consumption in Contemporary South Korea." *Journal of Korean Studies* 19.2 (2014): 429-48.

Jinsook Kim, "Sticky Activism: The Gangnam Station Murder Case and New Feminism Practices against Misogyny and Femicide." *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 60.4 (2021): 37-60.

Farz Edraki, "Escape the Corset: The Simmering Feminist Revolution in South Korea." *ABC News* December 19, 2019.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-20/south-korean-women-escape-the-corset/11611180>

THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS

Week 13. November 28: Gendered Mobilities and the Many Diasporas

Hae Yeon Choo, "The Cost of Rights: Migrant Women, Feminist Advocacy and Gendered Morality in South Korea" *Gender & Society* 27.4 (2013): 445-68.

Minjeong Kim, "South Korean Rural Husbands, Compensatory Masculinity, and International Marriage." *Journal of Korean Studies* 19.2 (2014): 291-325.

Carolyn Choi, "Moonlighting in the nightlife: From indentured to precarious labor in Los Angeles Koreatown's hostess industry." *Sexualities* 20.4 (2017): 446-62.

Week 14. December 5: Wrap-up, bring snacks!

Final Portfolios Due 8PM EST December 20