

Contemporary Korean Culture and Society

Lecturer	Anders Karlsson
Institution	SOAS, University of London
Email	ak49@soas.ac.uk
Teaching time	Morning

Course Description:

Over the last decade Korean contemporary culture and society has become known over the world through the Korean Wave. The aim of this course is to contextualize and provide an overview of contemporary Korean culture and society with main emphasis on South Korea. The course expects the students to participate actively through presentations and discussions. Documentaries will be screened and used for discussing specific aspects of the topic. Assessment will be based on a range of elements (see below) to enable students to display different skills.

Materials/Text:

A collection of articles to be provided to the students electronically during the course

Requirements:

None

Schedule:

- 1) Introduction/Background I: Traditional Culture and Society
- 2) Background II: Korea's Turbulent 20th Century/Documentary
- 3) Demography/Social Structure
- 4) Family life and the Confucian tradition
- 5) Gender issues
- 6) Education
- 7) Competitive Korea: English and Plastic Surgery/Documentary
- 8) Mid-term exam/Student Presentations
- 9) Political Culture
- 10) North Korean Culture and Society
- 11) Popular Culture/ Revival of Traditional Culture and Art Forms
- 12) Nationalism/Identity
- 13) Religion
- 14) Final Exam
- 15) Student Presentations/Concluding discussions

Assignments:

A 2000 word report on one of the following topics:

- 1) Discuss gender roles in contemporary South Korea and how recent socio-economic developments have change
- 2) Discuss the role of education in contemporary South Korean society and the position of women in Korean families.
- 3) Discuss changing patterns of identity construction and notions of Korean Culture and “Koreaness”.
- 4) Discuss the prominent role of Christianity in contemporary South Korea.
- 5) What are the most conspicuous demographic changes resulting from the rapid industrialization of South Korea and what are the main demographic challenges the country is facing today?
- 6) Discuss the recent discourse in South Korea surrounding the Korean Wave and the influence this phenomenon has had on national identity.

Evaluation:

Mid-Term exam 20% (short answer questions)

Report 15%

Presentation 25% (individual or group depending on student numbers)

Final Exam 30% (essay questions)

Attendance 10%