

# Understanding the Korean Peninsula and Its Neighbors

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Class time	Afternoon

## Course Description:

This course offers students an introduction to the modern history of the Korean Peninsula, contemporary politics in the two Koreas, and an overview of the Korean Peninsula's relationships with the surrounding countries including China, Japan, Russia, and the United States, as well as inter-Korean relations. The first two weeks will focus on learning about what has happened on the Korean Peninsula since the end of the Joseon Dynasty in the late 1800s until the present day. Students will learn about how South Korea became a world-class economy with a thriving culture and democracy while North Korea has struggled to keep pace. The second two weeks will focus on the Korean Peninsula's relationship with surrounding countries as well as the relationship between North and South Korea. In addition to interactive lectures, the class will include several site visits to key places associated with modern Korean history and contemporary events

Keywords: South Korea, North Korea, modern history, economic development, democracy, international relations

## Materials/Text:

Assigned readings will be provided by the instructor for each class period. With the understanding that this is a condensed summer course, the required readings will not be excessive in length.

## Requirements:

None

## Schedule:

### Section 1: History of the Korean Peninsula

#### Class 1: Class Introduction and History of the Korean Peninsula (1800s – 1953)

-Main Topics: Why did Korea become a colony of Japan? How was the Korean Peninsula divided? What happened during the Korean War?

-Reading: TBD

#### Class 2: History of the Two Koreas (1953 – Today)

-Main Topics: How did the two Koreas develop after the Korean War? How did South Korea become a highly developed economy while North Korea struggled?

-Reading: TBD

#### Class 3: Site Visit: Seodaemun Prison and Museum of Contemporary Korean History (TBC)

### Section 2: North and South Korean Societies

#### Class 4: Democratization of South Korea and Contemporary South Korean Politics

-Main Topics: How did South Korea become a thriving democracy? Why have South Korean politics been so contentious lately? Why did the president declare martial law in 2024?

-Reading: TBD

Class 5: Site Visit: National Assembly and the National Museum of Korean Democracy (TBC)

Class 6: Current Struggles of North Korean Society

- Main Topics: What is it like to live in North Korea today? Why do some North Koreans choose to leave the country? What is it like for North Korean defectors living in South Korea today?
- Reading: TBD

Class 7: South Korea's Aging Society

- Main topics: Why does South Korea have the lowest birth rate in the world? What kind of consequences does a low birth rate have for South Korea's future?
- Reading: TBD

Section 3: The Korean Peninsula and Its Neighbors

Class 8: The Korean Peninsula and Japan

- Main Topics: Why do the two Koreas continue to have contentious relations with Japan 80 years after the colonial era ended? Should South Korea and Japan have a closer relationship given their shared values and similar threat perceptions?
- Reading: TBD

Class 9: The Korean Peninsula and the United States

- Main Topics: How have South Korea-US relations developed over the 70 years of the alliance? Why do some South Koreans dislike the US? Is there any chance that North Korea and the US can normalize their relationship?
- Reading: TBD

Class 10: Site Visit: American Diplomacy House Seoul (TBC)

- Reading: TBD

Class 11: The Korean Peninsula and Russia

- Main Topics: How has Russia's relationship with the Korean Peninsula evolved since the end of the Cold War? Are we seeing a reemergence of the Cold War-era alignments in Northeast Asia?
- Reading: TBD

Class 12: The Korean Peninsula and China

- Main Topics: How has the Korean Peninsula's relationship with China evolved since China began to reform its economy? Why is anti-China sentiment increasing in South Korea? Is North Korea a puppet of China?
- Reading: TBD

Class 13: Site Visit: Visit to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

- Reading: TBD

Class 14: Inter-Korean Relations and Nuclear Weapons

- Main Topics: How has the relationship between the two Koreas developed over the years? How and why did North Korea develop nuclear weapons? Will South Korea develop nuclear weapons?
- Reading: TBD

Class 15: Final Presentation -In-class

final presentation

**Assignments:**

Site Visit Reflection: Students should write a reflection essay about one of the site visits during the semester (if the site visit has multiple destinations, then only pick one place). The essay should be submitted via email by the final class (July 31). Before visiting the chosen site, the student should do some background research about the site. Then in the reflection paper the student should reflect on how their perceptions of the site changed after the visit. The student should also reflect on how the visit to the site made them reevaluate their perceptions of Korea, Korean history, or Korea's relationships with its neighbors. The essay should be 1-2 pages (single-spaced) and any reference to

additional materials should be cited using Chicago Style footnotes.

**Final Presentations:** Depending on the size of the class, final presentations will either be a group project or an individual project. The presentation will entail simple research about the Korean Peninsula's relationship with other countries. The final presentations will be given on the final day of the course (July 31). More details will be provided on the first day of class. Time to prepare for the presentations will be given during class hours. And the instructor will remain in close contact with students to consult about the presentations and provide guidance.

**Class Participation:** Students should complete the assigned readings before class and be prepared to discuss them. The instructor will encourage discussions during lecture time and at various times throughout the semester there will be breakout discussions among students. Everybody should make an effort to participate in these discussions.

**Class Attendance:** The attendance policy for the course follows the policy of Dankook University and grades may be impacted by excessive absences.

**Evaluation:**

Site Visit Reflection Paper: 30%

Final Presentation: 50%

Class Participation: 10%

Class Attendance: 10%

Grading scale:

A+	A	B+	B	C+	C	D+	D	F
95 – 100	90 – 94.99	85 – 89.99	80 – 84.99	75 – 79.99	70 – 74.99	65 – 69.99	60 – 64.99	0 – 59.99

**Late Policy:**

If the site visit reflection paper is submitted late, 10% will be deducted for each day it is late.

**Plagiarism Policy:**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. Blatant, intentional plagiarism will result in an assignment being scored as "0." If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, please ask the instructor. If you use ideas or directly quote any materials, including the readings for this course, you should cite them using Chicago Style. You may use either the footnotes or author-date version of Chicago Style. Here is a link to help you format your citations: [https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html).

**Chat GPT and AI Policy:**

Chat GPT and other AI services are powerful tools that can help us learn, especially when we are confronted with a new topic about which we know little. However, it can also be an obstacle that detracts us from using our own minds to critically think about the world and inhibits us from developing our own writing or reasoning skills. If the instructor suspects an assignment has been written completely or in large part by an AI platform, the instructor will use AI detection software to check whether the assignment has been written by the student or by AI. If AI has been used, the instructor will not accept the assignment and the student will have to redo it and accept the late submission policy deductions.

Also, please be aware that assignments are not graded based on English-language usage. No points are deducted for incorrect grammar, punctuation, etc. Ideas are the most important. In other words, you do not need Chat GPT to check your grammar for the entire essay, but may use its help if you are struggling from time to time with certain sentences.