

Introduction to Korean Culture and Society
[EALC B115]
Fall 2026 / Bryn Mawr College
MW 1:10-2:30
Old Library 104

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Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00-2:00 p.m., or by appointment



Yi Yu-t'ae, *Hwaun*, 1944, ink and color on paper, 212 x 153 cm.

Courtesy of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea.

Course Description:

This course offers an introductory survey of Korean culture and society, focusing on major transformations and continuities during the modern period. Students will investigate various themes essential to comprehending Korea, such as Confucianism, modernization, colonialism, nationalism, industrialization, democratization, gender relations, US-Korea relations, and contemporary popular culture. In addition to class lectures, the course utilizes audio-visual materials, films, and slides to enhance the learning experience. No prior knowledge of Korea or Korean language is required.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course students will:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Korean culture and its social issues.
- Build the skill of advancing well-structured arguments about Korea by utilizing academic discourse in several course assignments.
- Enhance intercultural competence by comparing and contrasting Korean culture and society with those of other cultures and societies.

Required Text:

There is no required textbook for this course. All reading materials will be provided and uploaded on Moodle.

Requirements:

Attendance (10%)
 Participation (15%)
 Reading Response #1-3 (15%)
 Short Essays #1-3 (15%)
 Midterm Exam (10%)
 Group Project (15%)
 Final Paper (20%)

Course Grade:

95-100 A	90-94 A-	
87-89 B+	83-86 B	80-82 B-
75-79 C+	70-74 C	67-69 C-
63-66 D+	60-62 D	59- E

Guidelines:

Attendance: If you are unable to attend class, I ask that whenever possible you let me know ahead of time. You are allowed only 2 unexcused absences, except in cases of emergency. If such an emergency arises, please be in contact with me. If your unexcused absences add up to more than 2 days in total, your complete attendance score will be deducted. Additionally, if your unexcused absences add up to more than 4 days in total, your grade will be reduced by one grade level for each subsequent absence. For instance, if you are originally graded as B and have 5 absences, your grade will be adjusted to B-.

Participation: Throughout the semester, there will be several classroom activities designed primarily to give you opportunities to share your thoughts. Your participation in these activities will contribute to your participation grade. If you miss an activity due to an absence, you must complete it by the end of the week in which you were absent.

Reading Responses: You will have three reading assignments throughout the course. For each reading, you will select three passages that resonate with you the most. Post the selected passages on Moodle, along with an explanation of why they resonate with you.

Short Essays: You will write three short essays throughout the course and post them on Moodle. Additionally, you will provide comments on the essays of three classmates on Moodle.

Midterm Exam: The exam will cover the major themes and content of the readings assigned for Reading Responses and Extra Reading. Question banks will be provided in advance to help you prepare for the exam.

Group Project: The group project will be conducted in groups of 2–4 students. Each group will choose one of the following three options:

- **Option 1: Full-Length Presentation:** Select a topic related to Korean culture and society and give a 40–60-minute presentation, including a discussion section and interactive activities such as a quiz. The presentation should demonstrate thorough investigation and preparation.
- **Option 2: Collaborative Autoethnography:** Share and reflect on your experiences and thoughts related to a theme covered in the course, such as sexism or hierarchy. The project will include a collaborative paper and a brief presentation of approximately 10 minutes.
- **Option 3: Mini-Research:** Conduct a small-scale interview-based research project on a topic related to Korean culture and society. Interview questions should be developed collaboratively, and each group member will interview one person. Interviews must be audio- or video-recorded with permission. The project will include a written report, the recordings, and a brief presentation of approximately 10 minutes.

Final Paper: You will choose one of the themes covered in this course and write a final paper on that topic. The paper should be 6-10 pages, double-spaced, including references. You should incorporate 5-10 references into your paper.

AI Policy:

The use of AI is allowed only for the purpose of enhancing readability and language, such as grammar checking. Ensure that the thoughts and ideas presented in your short essays, final essay, and presentation are solely your own.

Accommodations:

Bryn Mawr College is dedicated to cultivating an inclusive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of its student population and ensures equitable access for students with disabilities. If you believe you may have a learning difference or disability, including those related to mental health, medical conditions, or physical impairments, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Access Services at accessservices@brynmawr.edu. The Director will maintain strict confidentiality and engage in a private conversation to guide you through the process of establishing reasonable accommodation.

For students who have already obtained approval for academic accommodations and wish to utilize these accommodations in this course, kindly share your accommodation letter with me. We will then coordinate a meeting to discuss the effective implementation of these accommodations within the context of this course. Your well-being and success in this class are of the utmost importance, and I am here to support you.

Daily Schedule (subject to change)

Wk	Day	Content	Assignments / Assessments
8/31 - 9/2	Mon	Course Introduction	
	Wed	<i>Arirang</i>	
9/7 - 9/9	Mon	No Class (Labor Day)	
	Wed	Foreign Interference 1	Reading Response #1, due on Tue (9/8) by 11:59 PM via Moodle
9/14 - 9/16	Mon	Foreign Interference 2	Short Essay #1, due on Sun (9/13) by 11:59 PM via Moodle
	Wed	Foreign Interference 3	Short Essay #1 Comments, due on Wed (9/16) by 11:59 PM via Moodle
9/21 - 9/23	Mon	Languages	
	Wed	The Korean War	Reading Response #2, due on Tue (9/22) by 11:59 PM via Moodle
9/28 - 9/30	Mon	Park Chung-hee	Extra Reading, due on Tue (9/27) by 11:59 PM
	Wed	Economics	
10/5 - 10/7	Mon	Hierarchy 1	Short Essay #2, due on Sun (10/4) by 11:59 PM via Moodle

	Wed	Hierarchy 2	Short Essay #2 Comments, due on Wed (10/7) by 11:59 PM via Moodle
10/12 -10/16	Fall Break		
10/19 -10/21	Mon	Democratization	Extra Reading, due on Sun (10/18) by 11:59 PM
	Wed	Education 1	
10/26 -10/28	Mon	Education 2	Reading Response #3, due on Sun (10/25) by 11:59 PM via Moodle
	Wed	Feminism	Extra Reading, due on Tue (10/27) by 11:59 PM
11/2 -11/4	Mon	Midterm Review	
	Wed	Midterm Exam	
11/9 -11/11	Mon	Popular Culture	
	Wed	Glocalization 1	
11/16 -11/18	Mon	Glocalization 2	Short Essay #3, due on Sun (11/15) by 11:59 PM via Moodle
	Wed	Presentation	Short Essay #3 Comments, due on Wed (11/18) by 11:59 PM via Moodle
11/23-11/25	Mon	Diversity 1	

	Wed	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i> No Class!	
11/30 -12/2	Mon	Diversity 2	
	Wed	Presentation	
12/7 - 12/9	Mon	Presentation	
	Wed	Future of Korea	Final Paper, due on Sun (12/13)