

# Cold War Cultures in Korea

Instructor: Travis Workman

Campuses: U of Minnesota, Ohio State U, and Pennsylvania State U

Course website: <http://coldwarculturesinkorea.com>

In this course we will analyze the Cold War (1945-1989) not only as an era in geopolitics, but also as a historical period marked by specific cultural and artistic forms. We focus on the Korean peninsula, looking closely at the literary and film cultures of both South Korea and North Korea. We discuss how the global conflict between U.S.-centered and Soviet-centered societies affected the politics, culture, and geography of Korea between 1945 and 1989, treating the division of Korea as an exemplary case extending from the origins of the Cold War to the present. We span the Cold War divide to compare the culture and politics of the South and the North through various cultural forms, including anti-communist and socialist realist films, biography and autobiography, fiction, and political discourse. We also discuss the legacy of the Cold War in contemporary culture and in the continued existence of two states on the Korean peninsula. The primary purpose is to be able to analyze post-1945 Korean cultures in both their locality and as significant aspects of the global Cold War era. Topics will include the politics of melodrama, cinema and the body, visualizing historical memory, culture under dictatorship, and issues of gender.

## TEXTS

For Korean texts and films, the writer or director's family name appears first. Please use the family name in your essays and check with me if you are unsure. You are welcome to use either the McCune-Reischauer system or the revised South Korean system in order to romanize Korean words. However, I have generally used the most common romanizations of names and it will be impossible to be truly consistent.

Assigned pages must be read and assigned films must be viewed carefully before the class period where they appear in the schedule below.

## Required Books:

Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*

Kang Chol-hwan, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*

Hwang Sok-yong, *The Guest*

Required films viewed at the course website:

*Hand of Destiny* (South Korea, Han Hyung-mo, 1954)

*Piagol* (South Korea, Lee Kang-cheon, 1955)

*The Flower Girl* (North Korea, Ch'oe Ikkyu, 1971)

*Wolmi Island* (North Korea, Kim Kil-in, 1982)

*The Marines Who Never Returned* (South Korea, Lee Man Hee, 1964)  
*Centre Forward* (North Korea, Kim Kil-in, 1978)  
*A Single Spark* (South Korea, Park Kwang-su, 1995)  
*A Flower in Hell* (South Korea, Sin Sang-ok, 1958)  
*White Badge* (South Korea, Jeong Ji-yeong, 1992)  
*Pulgasari* (North Korea, Sin Sang-ok, 1985)

#### ASSIGNMENTS (4):

1) Six bi-iweekly response papers (2 pages double-spaced) due by email (tworkman@umn.edu). You are encouraged to compare North Korean and South Korean texts when possible. Your paper must contain at least three direct citations from the assigned readings or films. Direct citations of written texts should be quotations. Citations of films should either quote dialog directly or provide a detailed and accurate description of a scene. Use MLA or Chicago citation. The instructor may use portions of your papers in class in order to further discussion.

2) One class presentation on a reading or film (10-15 minutes). You may do your presentation by yourself or with a partner. You will sign up for a reading or film by the end of the second week. For the presentation you will provide some summary of the content of the text, but you should focus on posing some important questions to the class and on providing your own *interpretation* of the reading or film.

3) Midterm paper, 6-8 pages double-spaced in MLA or Chicago style formatting. You will receive topics on 10/16 and the paper is due on 10/21 in class or by email.

4) Final paper 7-8 pages double-spaced in MLA or Chicago style formatting. You will receive topics on 12/4 and it is due by 5pm, 12/17 over email or in my mailbox at 220 Folwell Hall for Minnesota students.

#### GRADE:

Attendance and classroom participation 10%  
Classroom presentation on a reading or a film 15%  
Weekly postings 20%  
Midterm paper 25%  
Final paper 30%

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Attendance is required and absences must be excused. Proctors will be responsible for monitoring attendance at Ohio State and Penn State.

#### COURSE SCHEDULE:

T 9/2 What does it mean to study the *cultures* of the Cold War? What does it mean to compare the North Korean and South Korean contexts?

Th 9/4 Ban Wang, "The Cold War, Imperial Aesthetics, and Area Studies"

## **I. Historical Background: From Japanese Imperialism to the Cold War**

T 9/9 Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 1-37 (chap. 1), p. 71-106 (chap. 3), p. 166-190 (chap. 6)

Th 9/11 Bruce Cumings, "The Passions (1945-1948)"

## **II. Melodrama and the Cinematic Body**

Melodrama and Partisan Films in the North

T 9/16 Wylie Sypher, "Aesthetic of Revolution: The Marxist Melodrama." Response Paper #1 due.

Th 9/18 Film: *Flower Girl* (1971); Kyung Hyun Kim, "The Fractured Cinema of North Korea: Discourse of the Nation in *Sea of Blood*."

Melodrama and Anti-Communism in the South

T 9/23 Film: *The Hand of Destiny* (1954). Daniel Martin, "South Korean Cinema's Postwar Pain: Gender and National Division in Korean War Films from the 1950s to the 2000s."

Th 9/25 Film: *Piagol* (1955).

## **III. The Korean War in Film and Fiction**

North Korea

T 9/30 Han Sorya, *Jackals* (1951); Bruce Cumings, "Collision (1948-1953)." Response Paper #2 due.

Th 10/2 Film: *Wolmi Island* (1982). Taught from Penn St.

South Korea

T 10/7 Hwang Sun-won, "Cranes"

Th 10/9 Lee Man Hee, *The Marines Who Never Returned*; David Scott Diffrient, "Military Enlightenment for the Masses: Genre and Cultural Intermixing in South Korea's Golden Age War Films"

## **IV. Ideology and Economy**

Juche Thought in North Korea

T 10/14 Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution*, p. 136-165 (chap. 5); Kim Il Sung, ” “

Th 10/16 Film: *Centre Forward* (1978). Response paper #3 due. Midterm topics received.

Developmental Dictatorship in South Korea

T 10/21 Eun Mee Kim and Gil-Sung Park, “The *Chaebol*.” Midterm due.

Th 10/23 Film: *A Single Spark* (1995). Taught from Ohio State.

### **V. Gender and Military Camp Culture in South Korea**

T 10/28 Jin-kyung Lee, “Military Prostitution: Gynocentrism, Racial Hybridity, and Diaspora”; Ch’oe In-hun, “The End of the State Highway.” Response Paper #4 due.

Th 10/30 Film: *A Flower in Hell* (1958).

### **VI. The Concentration Camp and Refugees, North Korea**

T 11/11 Kang, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*, p. 1-80; Giorgio Agamben, “The Camp as the ‘Nomos’ of the Modern”

Th 11/13 Kang, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*, p. 81-118

T 11/18 Kang, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*, p. 119-182 (or as far as possible).

Th 11/20 Kang, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*, p. 183-238. Response Paper #5 due.

### **VII. The Vietnam War**

T 11/25 Jin-kyung Lee, “Surrogate Military, Subempire, and Masculinity: South Korea in the Vietnam War”; Charles Armstrong, “America’s Korea, Korea’s Vietnam”

Th 11/27 Film: *White Badge*

### **VIII. Perilous Memories, post-Cold War**

T 11/25 Hwang Sok-yong, *The Guest*, p. 11-103

Th 11/27 THANKSGIVING BREAK

T 12/2 Hwang Sok-yong, *The Guest*, p. 105-234.

Th 12/4 Hwang Sok-yong, *The Guest*, continued. Response paper #6 due. Receive final paper topics.

**IX. Post-Cold War and Globalization: The Case of Sin Sang-ok**

T 12/9 Film: *Pulgasari*; Steven Chung, "The Split Screen: Sin Sang-ok in North Korea."  
Film: *Pulgasari*.

Final paper due by 5pm on 12/17