

**Cultures & Contexts: Korea (CORE UA-543)**  
**FALL 2021**

**LECTURE:** M/W 3:30 PM – 4:45 PM (LOCATION: SILV 408)

Professor Yoon Jeong Oh

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Office: 19 University Place, Room 504

Office Hours: [M/W 2:15pm–3:15pm](#) (Schedule at <https://calendly.com/yoon-oh>)

**RECITATIONS:**

T 8:00-9:15 AM (LOCATION: TISC\_LC5) / 9:30-10:45 AM (LOCATION: 60 5<sup>TH</sup> AVE, RM C04)

TA: Hannah Kwak

Email: [yk2408@nyu.edu](mailto:yk2408@nyu.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:00pm-2pm (virtual)

T 8:00-9:15 AM (LOCATION: TISC\_LC4) / 9:30-10:45 AM (LOCATION: 12WV\_L114)

TA: Peter Yoon

Email: [jy1320@nyu.edu](mailto:jy1320@nyu.edu)

Office Hours: M/W 2:00pm-3:pm (virtual)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Human being is often conceptualized according to various social relationships. The concepts of individual or self, for example, are closely related to those of society or the other. Are these global ideas? All of these modern concepts have in fact been imported and translated into Korea in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This course introduces how the self-formation of the “I” and “we” are understood and represented in relationships by exploring the topics of love, family, community, and society in modern Korean culture. It is not a mere coincidence that the concept of love, or free love, is brought into Korea soon after the concepts of individual and society are introduced and translated from Europe through Japan. Korean literature, including Yi Kwang-su’s *Mujong*, said to be the very first modern Korean novel, often depicts a love story as a quest of the modern individual’s self-discovery. Moreover, the family narrative that is predominant in Korean culture is also intimately related to the ups and downs of national history and social changes. By analyzing the conceptualization of the “I” along the formation of the “we” in Korean literature, film, TV drama, among other forms of cultural production, students will be able to explore broad spectrum of Korean culture and contextualize it on both individual and social levels.

Cultures and Contexts is intended to prepare you for life in a globalized world. Through critical engagements with primary cultural materials, it introduces you to ways humans come to understand themselves as members of social, religious, national, and regional collectives, and with the dynamics of cultural interaction and influence. As a part of the College Core Curriculum, it is designed to extend your education beyond the focused studies of your major, preparing you for your future life as a thoughtful individual and active member of society.

**REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION**

- **Attendance:**

Attendance to all class meetings, including lectures and recitations, is mandatory. After two unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered one full letter (A- to B-; B+ to C+; and so on). More than three absences will automatically result in failing the course even if you have completed all other course requirements.

- **Participation:**  
You are expected to arrive in class on time and fully prepared to contribute. A good participant will share his or her thoughts and ideas on the assigned readings, listen to peers, and respond by building on others' ideas or raising critical questions.
- **Writing Assignments:**  
You will have to complete three short papers (2, 4, 6 pages respectively) and a final paper (8 pages). Essay prompts for each writing assignment will be given as the semester progresses. All papers must meet the required length (double-spaced, 12 point font) and be submitted as a .doc or docx file under the "Assignments" tab on [NYU Brightspace](#) by the deadline stated in the course schedule. Late work will not be accepted. Should you need an extension, it must be approved in advance.
- **Evaluation:**  
Your final grade will be calculated as the following:

Attendance & participation	20%
Short papers	25% (6%+8%+11%)
Final paper	15%
Midterm exam	15%
Final exam	25%

- **Academic Integrity:**  
Academic integrity means that all of your work submitted to class is yours and yours alone. Obviously, bringing answers into an examination or copying all or part of a paper straight from a book, the Internet, or a fellow student is a violation of this principle. But there are other forms of cheating or plagiarizing which are just as serious—for example, presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written); writing a sentence or paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else's idea(s) without a reference to the source of the idea(s); or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both instructors have given their permission in advance). Receiving or giving help on a take-home paper, examination, or quiz is also cheating, unless expressly permitted by the instructor (as in collaborative projects). Plagiarism automatically means a failing grade for the relevant assignment (0%) and possibly the entire course. Please refer to the University's Code of Academic Integrity for more details at <https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html>.
- **Accommodations:**  
Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

## READINGS

- The following texts will be available at the NYU Bookstore and reserved at Bobst library:

- Yi, Kwang-su. *Mujöng*. Trans. Ann Sung-Hi Lee. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.
- Choi, In-hun. *The Square*. Trans. Kim Seong-kon. Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2014.

\*All the other readings will be available under the “Content” tab on [NYU Brightspace](#).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

\*Subject to change as the semester progresses.

### I. LOVE AND ROMANCE: BETWEEN MODERN INDIVIDUAL AND COLONIAL SUBJECT

#### Week 1

Mon, Sep 6 Labor Day (No classes scheduled)  
Wed, Sep 8 Introduction  
(Start reading YI Kwang-su, *Mujǒng*, 77-348)

#### Week 2

Mon, Sep 13 Seth, "3. From Kingdom to Colony," in *A Very Short Introduction: Korea*, 47-68.  
Wed, Sep 15 Williams, "Individual" in *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 114-117.  
Yoo and An, "Conceptualization of the Individual as a Modern Subject in Korea: Analysis of Co-occurrence Relations," 13-35.  
(Continue reading YI Kwang-su, *Mujǒng*, 77-348)

#### Week 3

Mon, Sep 20 YI Kwang-su, "Maybe Love," 321-327.  
Chiyoung Kim, "The Conceptual History of 'Yǒnae' (Love) in the Korean Colonial Period," 113-140.  
Wed, Sep 22 YI Kwang-su, *Mujǒng*, 77-210.

**\*Sep 25: First short paper (2 pages) due by 11:59 pm.**

#### Week 4

Mon, Sep 27 YI Kwang-su, *Mujǒng*, 210-348.  
Wed, Sep 29 Kwon, "The Paradoxical Structure of Modern 'Love' in Korea," 185-208 & "The World in a Love Letter," 19-33.

### II. WOMAN AND FAMILY, OR WHERE FEMALE INDIVIDUAL DISAPPEARS

#### Week 5

Mon, Oct 4 NA Hye-sǒk, "Kyǒnghŭi," 61-86.  
Choi, "Wise Mother, Good Wife: A Transcultural Discursive Construct in Modern Korea," 1-34.  
Wed, Oct 6 NA Hye-sǒk, "A Confession About My Divorce," 123-138.  
Yoo, "["The New Woman' and the Politics of Love, Marriage, and Divorce and in Colonial Korea"](#) [24 pages]

**\*Oct 9: Second short paper (4 pages) due by 11:59 pm.**

#### Week 6

Mon, Oct 11 FALL BREAK (No classes scheduled)

- Tue, Oct 12 Legislative Monday (Classes will meet on a Monday schedule)  
Seth, “4. From colony to competing states” & “5. Competing states, diverging societies,” in *A Very Short Introduction: Korea*, 69-106
- Wed, Oct 13 Film: KIM Ki-young, *The Housemaid [Hanyō]* (1960)

**Week 7**

- Mon, Oct 18 CHOI In-hun, *The Square*, 11-84  
Wed, Oct 20 CHOI In-hun, *The Square*, 84-158

**Week 8**

- Mon, Oct 25 Midterm Review  
Wed, Oct 27 **Midterm exam**

**Week 9**

- Mon, Nov 1 KANG Sok-kyong, “A Room in the Woods,” 28-147.  
Wed, Nov 3 Jesook SONG, “Family Breakdown and Invisible Homeless Women,” 37-65.

**Week 10**

- Mon, Nov 8 Heonik KWON, “The Democratic Family,” 106-121.  
Wed, Nov 10 Film: YOON Je-kyoon, *Ode to My Father* (2014)  
Nan KIM, “Reuniting Families, Reframing the Korean War” [24 pages]

**III. SOCIETY AND STATE, “THE NEW KINSHIP”**

**Week 11**

- Mon, Nov 15 Terry Eagleton, “Culture and Civilization,” in *Culture*, 1-29.  
KU In Mo, “‘Culture’ as an Imported Concept and ‘Korea’ as a Nation-State,” 152-176.  
Wed, Nov 17 YI Kwang-su, “What is Literature?” 293-313.

**\*Nov 20: Third short paper (6 pages) due by 11:59 pm.**

**Week 12**

- Mon, Nov 22 Ryang, “Biopolitics or the Logic of Sovereign Love—Love’s Whereabouts in North Korea,” 57-83.  
Wed, Nov 24 Nam-nyong PAEK, *Friend*, 1-97.

**Week 13**

- Mon, Nov 29 Nam-nyong PAEK, *Friend*, 98-216.  
Wed, Dec 1 Uchang Kim, “The Agony of Cultural Construction: Politics and Culture in Modern Korea,” in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, 163-197.

**Week 14**

- Mon, Dec 6 In-class screening: *Misaeng* (2014) ep.1  
Wed, Dec 8 Elfving-Hwang, “Aestheticizing Authenticity: Corporate Masculinities in Contemporary South Korean Television Dramas,” 55-72.

Final Course Review

**Week 15**

Mon, Dec 13 **Final Exam**

*\*Dec 17: Final paper due by 11:59 pm.*