ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES 130B  
THE KOREAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE  

Fall 2001   T & Th 2:00-3:15  
# 121-715-200  1102 Perloff  

Instructor: Kyeyoung Park  
Office hrs: Thursday 4:00-5:00 (& by appointment)  
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Course Description:  
This class will introduce students to the major topics in studies of the Korean American community today, especially relating to history and diaspora, women’s issues, youth concerns, family matters, interethnic relations, religion, and issues related to empowerment and activism. The class moves away from the economic study of Korean American small businesses towards more cultural and political analysis. It pays specific attention to the diversity, complexity, contradiction, and hybridity in the Korean American community. The course emphasizes four objectives:  

- First, an ethnological exploration of the Korean American community, with emphasis on the underrepresented subjects of race, class, and gender.  
- Second, a broad overview of the central topics in Korean American studies.  
- Third, a close examination of current problems facing Korean Americans, specifically issues affecting each generation and questions of religion, politics, and empowerment.  
- Fourth, an analysis of the experience of the growing number of young Korean/Asian Americans.  

As a case study, the course will also examine the role of Korean American communities in the 1992 Los Angeles Crisis.  

Requirements:  
1. Class participation (10 points).  
3. Final exam (45 points).  
4. Short paper (5-6 pages) on Assigned Project  
   (20 points, due: after 7 weeks)  

Readings: The following texts are available at the bookstore.  

Copies of the following articles not included in the above texts will be on reserve in the Reading Room (Asian American Studies). The course reader will be available at Course Reader Material, 1141 Westwood Blvd. (310) 443-3303.

Class Schedule

Part I: Introduction and Overview
W 1, What It Means to Be Korean/Asian American?

Optional

How Do We Study the Korean American Experience?
• Lofland & Lofland, Analyzing Social Settings, 47-73 and 131-37, Belmont: Wadsworth Pub., 1984
• Park, K., Preface and Introduction. In The Korean American Dream, xiii-xvii & 1-6

Optional:
• Park, K., Public Ethnographer: In Pursuit of Intercessory Ethnography. 
  Anthropology UCLA 20:1-26, 1993

W2, What is the New Generation of Korean/Asian Americans?
• Thai, H., “Splitting Things in Half is so White!”: Conception of Family Life and 
  Friendship and the Formation of Ethnic Identity among Second Generation 
• Maira, S., The Politics of “Cool”: Indian American Youth Culture in New York 
  City.  In Encounters: People of Asian Descent in the Americas, ed. by R. 
• Alsaybar, B., Deconstructing Deviance: Filipino American Youth Gangs, “Party 
  Culture,” and Ethnic Identity in Los Angeles.  Amerasia Journal 
  25(1): 116-38, 1999
• Joo, R. M., (Trans)National Pastimes and Korean American Subjectivities: 
  Reading Chan Ho Park.  Journal of Asian American Studies 3(3): 301-328, 
  2000
• Park, K., “I Really Do Feel I’m 1.5!”: The Construction of Self and Community 
  by Young Korean Americans.  Amerasia Journal 25(1): 139-64, 1999
• Park, K., “I’m Floating in the Air”: Creation of a Korean Transnational Space 
  among Korean-Latino American Remigrants.  Positions 7(3): 667-695, 
  1999

Video, Yellow (or The Korean American Spirit)

Optional
  25 (1): 1-28
• Yang, F., ABC and XYZ: Religious, Ethnic and Racial Identities of the New 
  115
• Lee, Chang-rae, Native Speaker.  NY: Riverhead books, 1995

Part II: Korean Diaspora and Korean American History
W3, Labor Migration to Hawaii and California Korean American History
• Chin, S., Doing What Had to be Done

Optional:
• Patterson, W., The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 
  1896-1910, Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1988
• Patterson, W., The Ilse: First-Generation Korean Immigrants in Hawaii, 
• Pomerantz, The Background of Korean Emigration.  In Labor Immigration Under 
  Capitalism: Asian Workers in the U.S. Before World War II.
L. Cheng and E. Bonacich, eds.

- Ronyoung Kim, Clay Walls. Univ. of Washington P., 1987
- Pak, T., Guilt Payment. In Guilt Payment, 5-18. Bamboo Ridge Press

Video. Crossing Chasms

Optional:
- Choy, B., Koreans in America, 141-84

W5, The New Immigration, 1965-present

- Park, K., Korean Migration to America: Dependent Development and American Fever (Ch. 2). In The Korean American Dream, 7-35

Optional:
- Min, P. G., 9. Korean Immigrants in Los Angeles. In Immigration and
Entrepreneurship: Culture, Capital and Ethnic Networks, Transaction Publishers, 185-204, 1993

Midterm exam

Part III: Contemporary Korean American Community
W6, Work, the Ethnic Economy, and Class Differentiation

- Park, K., The Gravitation to Small Business (Ch. 3). In The Korean American Dream, 36-70

Optional:
- Yoon, I., Class, Family, and Ethnicity in Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurship (Ch. 3). In On My Own, 100-73

W7, Gender and Marriage

- Park, K., Women’s Changing Viewpoints: The Pursuit of Human Dignity (Ch. 6). In The Korean American Dream 113-38

Optional:

**W8, Family Issues and Education**
• Park, K., Establishment and the Domestic Cycle (Ch. 4) The Rise of Sisters in Korean America: The Shift to Women-Centered Kin Organization (Ch. 5). In *The Korean American Dream*, 71-112

**Video**, *My America…or Honk if You Love Buddha*

Optional:
• Tuan, M., Korean and Russian Students in a Los Angeles High School: Exploring the Alternative Strategies of Two High-Achieving Groups. In ?

W9, Religion and Political Participation
• Park, K., Political Processes (Ch. 8)
• The Comforts of Christianity for Korean Immigrants: Religion and Reproduction of Small Business Activity (Ch. 9). In The Korean American Dream, 155-200

Optional

A Commitment to Social Change and Empowerment

Guest Speaker

Optional:
Part IV: A Case Study


Video: Twilight

- South Central Aftermath: Black and Latino Commentaries on Koreans L. A. Uprising (unpublished Manuscript)

Optional:

Assignment

Be a participant observer of public or private events or activities involving 1.5 or 2nd generation Korean Americans at various locations in Korea Town or other Korean American places (at least through a couple of visits); write an ethnography and comparative analysis (5-6 pages = 4 page field data, 1 page summary plus 1 page analysis)

-collect documents
-map/describe setting (e.g., churches, schools or other educational settings, workplaces, market places, community/neighborhood events, places of leisure (karaoke/noraebang, coffeeshops, cafes, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, etc.), family gathering or rituals)
-identify audience: leaders, VIPs; ethnicity, age, gender, etc.

course of events: those you observe, and fill in accounts before and after (documents, interviews)
-describe as fully as you can—so you can use this description later—

event (e.g., Korean Festival) as a series of events—main sequence—on stage
-side events (demonstrations, food and other booths); informal events
-audience—families—picnics—role of organizers (& guests)
-watch people’s actions

-informal or casual interviews: talk to at least 3 persons there: identify yourself and your purpose
-UCLA student studying Los Angeles Korean American community—questions: have you been here before; why have you come; what do you like most; know other people here; why do you think this is important to Korean Americans living in LA
-observe how they interact with others

-think of points of comparison with another event—record what you think may be similar or different—form hypothesis as you go

Fieldnotes (double spaced) due immediately after 7th week—Monday class