Sample syllabus #2 (Ohio State University, Fall 2015)

The Korean Conflict: Current Issues and Historical Context

Instructor: Pil Ho Kim

Course Description

This is an introductory course for undergraduate students who want to make sense of the volatile geopolitical situation surrounding the Korean peninsula by learning the modern history of the divided Korean nation. Starting from examining the current military tension between North and South Korea, it traces the origins of the conflict back to the early modern period of Japanese colonization, liberation and the subsequent national division, and the Korean War.

Then we will see how each of the two Koreas has developed its own political economic system, and how it has been coping with internal crises as well as external challenges to the system, such as security, poverty, democracy and human rights. All these topics will be primarily pursued from political, economic and sociological perspectives, yet we will also have opportunities to see the cultural aspects of life in the two Koreas by means of films, music, print journalism and other available media.

In the end, the course returns to the current tension. The crucial role that the U.S. has historically played in the Korean situation will be considered, along with the role of other powerful neighbors of China, Japan and Russia. In conclusion, the prospects of Korean reunification and a peaceful Northeast Asia will be discussed.

Course Materials

Required textbook

Other required texts
All other course readings listed on the syllabus are required and readily accessible through Carmen; they are online resources available either in public domain, OSU Library, or under fair use.

Assignments, Exams, Evaluation

Weekly discussion memo
Each week, all students are required to write a minimum of 400-word memo that reviews required readings and raises questions for in-class discussion. Students are supposed to formulate their own ideas rather than simply summarize readings. Each memo counts for 2% of the final
grade. Memo is due on Tuesday BEFORE beginning of class, preferably to be uploaded on Carmen but email or paper copy also accepted. 1% deduction for late submission after Tuesday’s class; no late submission accepted after Wednesday.

**Midterm exam**
One in-class midterm exam will be given before the Thanksgiving Break (refer to Course Schedule on this syllabus). Contact instructor immediately if there is any foreseeable schedule conflict. Otherwise, make-up exams will not be given unless extraordinary circumstances exist. The midterm exam counts for 20% of the final grade. It will test students’ comprehension of course material, lectures, and class discussions. More details will be announced later.

**Final research project: presentation and term paper**
Each student is required to conduct a research project on a self-selected topic upon instructor’s approval. Research proposal should be at least 1,000 words in length (about 4 double-spaced pages), including a statement of research question(s), a brief literature review, and a list of references. Presentation should be about 10-15 minutes long for an individual and 15-20 minutes long for a group. Final paper should be at minimum 3,500 words (about 15 pages) including proper citations, endnotes and bibliography. The research project counts for 50% of the final grade – 10% for proposal, 10% for presentation, and 30% for term paper. Refer to Course Schedule for relevant due dates. If possible, upload all submissions (proposal, presentation slides, final paper) on Carmen for record keeping.

**Class attendance and participation**
A missing class without prior notice will result in 1% deduction from attendance and participation, which counts for 10% of the final grade. Attendance check will be done at the beginning of class, and leaving early after attendance check without instructor approval constitutes an absence. Those who are late (arriving at class after attendance check) will have 0.5% deduction; same for classroom distraction with digital devices (cell phone, tablet, notebook computer, etc.).

**Course Schedule**

**Thursday, Aug 27**  Course introduction

**Week 1 (Sep 2-4) Ongoing military tension in the Korean Peninsula**

**Week 2 (Sep 9-11) Nuclear North Korea: Engage or let it collapse?**

**Week 3 (Sep 16-18) The Korean Peninsula from the international security perspectives**
Ming Liu, “Korean Peninsula Division/Unification and China: From the Security Perspective of China,” pp. 57-80;

**Week 4 (Sep 23-25) Origins of the Korean conflict I: National division and war**
*Odyssey* Chapter 5, “Liberation, Civil War, and Division,” pp. 100-120.
Byun Young-joo (1997) Habitual Sadness

**Week 5 (Sep 30-Oct 2) Origins of the Korean conflict II: Colonial subjugation**
*Odyssey* Chapter 1-2, pp. 8-55.

**Week 6 (Oct 7-9) Korea’s modernization under Japanese rule: Colonial modernity?**
*Odyssey* Chapter 3-4, pp. 56-99.

**Week 7 (Oct 14-16) Political Economy of the Cold War South Korea**
*Odyssey* Chapter 6, pp. 121-145.

**Week 8 (Oct 21-23) Democratization and authoritarian legacies in South Korea**
*Odyssey* Chapter 8, pp. 167-181.

*Recommended video: Kim Dong-won (2003) Repatriation*

**Week 9 (Oct 28-30) North Korea: The building of a ‘partisan family state’**

*Odyssey* Chapter 7, pp. 146-166.
   PBS Frontline (2014) Secret State of North Korea

**Week 10 (Nov 4-6) Midterm exam week**
No reading assignment; midterm summary on Tuesday, Nov 4.
Midterm exam on Thursday, Nov 6.

**Week 11 (Nov 13) North Korea: Famine and humanitarian crisis**
Tuesday Nov 11 (Veterans’ Day): No class
*Recommended video: Jim Butterworth, Lisa Sleeth and Aaron Lubarsky (2005) Seoul Train
   Ann Shin (2012) The Defector: Escape from North Korea*

**Week 12 (Nov 18-20) North Koreans in South Korea: reality vs. cultural representation**
*Recommended video: Marc Wiese (2012) Camp 14: Total Control Zone*

**Week 13 (Nov 25) Final research proposal discussion**
No reading assignment
Final research proposal due: Nov 25 before class
Thursday Nov 27 (Thanksgiving Break): No class
Week 14-15 (Dec 2-9) Prospects for peace and reunification
Thursday Dec 4: No class

**Final research presentation:** during finals week (time & place tba)
**Final term paper due:** Wed Dec 17.