

EALC 450B  
THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF KOREA  
Thursday, 9:30-11:50

Nancy Abelmann

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30-4:30, Davenport 389

### Course Description

This course offers a survey of what I consider to be the most important ethnographic studies of South Korea *available in English*. While the list is not, of course, comprehensive, it does represent a significant portion of a still somewhat small field. I have chosen additional theoretical and ethnographic (in some cases comparative) works in order to help situate the primary works. Some of the theoretical reading are contemporaneous of the ethnographic work, allowing you -- I hope -- to have a sense of the work in its times. In this sense this course is interested in considering these works in the history of anthropology -- its theory and practice. Other works have been chosen to show more recent or varying ways in which the topic at hand has been treated. The syllabus is largely chronological; April, however, is largely devoted to gender and organized, instead, along class lines. I think that the focus on gender of that section of the course reflects the particular development of the ethnography of Korea (and perhaps my interests as well). One of my primary hopes is that the class will be helpful for you -- that it will allow you to further locate your own work in Korean, or East Asian, or anthropological study.

### Books for Purchase (and on reserve at the Education and Social Science Library)

Brandt, Vincent. 1990 (1971). A Korean Village: Between Farm and Sea. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Janelli, Roger L. and Dawnhee Yim. 1982. Ancestor Worship and Korean Society. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kendall, Laurel. 1985. Shamans, Housewives and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Abelmann, Nancy. 1996. Echoes of the Past, Epics of Dissent. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Roger L. Janelli with Dawnhee Yim. 1993. Making Capitalism: The Social and Cultural Construction of a South Korean Conglomerate. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kendall, Laurel. 1996. Getting Married in Korea: of Gender, Morality and Modernity. Berkeley: University of California Press.

### Reader

Available for purchase at Notes-n-Quotes, 344-4433 in Johnstowne Centre. (and on reserve at the Education and Social Science Library)

A **second** (and much smaller) **reader** will be available later in the semester as I obtain some last-minute readings.



## Assignments

### **WebBoard Posts: 10/13 x 6 = 60%.**

WebBoard is an asynchronous learning network; that is, a place on the Web where you can post your thoughts/responses to me and to your classmates. The posts are to be "posted" by 7 p.m. on the Wednesday before the class. Posts are not papers; they are, however, well-organized and well thought-out responses to the readings assigned for that particular seminar. I anticipate that the post will make attempts to integrate those readings among themselves and also to integrate those readings with the readings and discussions of past weeks. I would imagine that posts will be somewhere between 1 and 3 pages. A part of your WebBoard assignment is reading the posts of your classmates; this is why I have made the deadline earlier on Wednesday evening. By reading (and writing) the posts we will begin the seminar the next day with a number of ideas/responses on the table, so to speak. I will probably begin each class by responding to the posts as-a-group and suggesting directions and problems for that particular day. As you can see, you can choose three weeks for which you will not post -- my thinking here is that there will be weeks when the demands of other classes make it hard to write notes in addition to completing the reading; this in no way dismisses you from reading the materials or from reading your colleague's posts.

### **Report: 5%**

You will note that there are many weeks in which there are readings printed in italics under "Report" at the bottom of the reading list. I have selected these as ethnographic readings which supplement the readings of the day, but I have not made them required because, of course, there are limits to your energy and time. My hope is that each of you will volunteer for one (or more!) of these. Your "report" refers to a short (10-15 minute) presentation to be made at some point during that seminar session. The point of the presentation is to: (1) introduce the work to the class and (2) consider the work in relation to the readings of the day (or of earlier classes). In part this allows all of you to learn, at least briefly, about other ethnographic works out there. With each reading I have indicated where it is available in **bold** print.

### **Final Paper: 25%**

The Final paper is not a research paper. It is a 10-15 page paper in which you review the Korean ethnographic literature on a particular theme. That is, you cover a particular topic throughout all the literature that we will have surveyed. A theme, a topic -- what does she have in mind, you wonder. You might, for example, take motherhood, or ritual observance, or family structure, or health etc. My hope is that for many of you this will allow you to survey a topic that is closely related to your planned dissertation research. For those of you who are in the middle of planning dissertation research on Korea, you should perhaps best think of this paper as an extended literature review section of a grant application -- that is, the place where you situate your own proposed research in the ethnographic literature. I would like to hear from each of you briefly in class (5-10 minutes) on March 4, March 11 or March 25 as to your thoughts/plans for this paper; this will allow all of us to be thinking about your particular topic as the semester proceeds.

### **Classroom Participation/Attendance: 10%.**

The success of this class depends entirely on your consistent attendance and active participation in class. We are embarking on a semester-long dialogue about the ethnography of Korea. My hope is that week-to-week we will look back on earlier readings so that we all have a sense about this as a literature with particular trends and developments. Although I have read most of the work before, I have never read it in sequence -- and I am really excited/curious about

how it will read this way and how all of you will read it. This is what makes classes fun -- they are unique; that is, the discussion will take shape in one way or another because of you! Don't worry about being smart or impressing one another or me. All I ask is that you read, attend, and share your thoughts.

## Weekly Schedule

January 21, Thursday

Introduction

January 28, Thursday

Osgood, Cornelius. 1951(Research:1947). The Koreans and their Culture. NY: Ronald. Pp. 3-13, 92-114, 325-346. **Reader.**

Marilyn Strathern et al. 1989. "1989 Debate: The Concept of Society is Theoretically Obsolete." In Tim Ingold, ed. Key Debates in Anthropology. NY: Routledge. Pp. 57-98. **Reader.**

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In Clifford Geertz, ed. The Interpretation of Cultures. Pp. 3-30. NY: Basic Books. **Reader.**

### **REPORT**

*Han, Chungnim Choi. 1949. Social Organization of Upper Han Hamlet in Korea. In *passim* (microfilm) Nancy.*

February 4, Thursday

Brandt, Vincent. 1971 (Research:1966) A Korean Village.

Turner, Victor. 1969. The Ritual Process. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Pp. 94-111, 125-130. **Reader.**

Pak, Ki-hyuk with Sidney D. Gamble. 1975. The Changing Korean Village. Seoul: Shin-hung Press. Pp. 189-201. **Reader.**

### **REPORT**

*Chun, Kyung-soo. 1984 (Research:1975-76) Reciprocity and Korean Society: An Ethnography of Hasami. Seoul: Seoul National University Press. Pp. 1-12, 89-140, 187-194. Nancy*

*Han, Sang-Bok. 1977 (Research:1968-69). Korean Fishermen; Ecological Adaption in Three Communities. Seoul: Seoul National University Press. Nancy*

February 11, Thursday

Janelli, Roger L. and Dawnhee Yim. 1982 (Research:1973/1977) Ancestor Worship and Korean Society.

Wolf, Arthur P. 1974. "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors." In Arthur P. Wolf, ed. Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society. Stanford: Stanford University Press. **Reader.**

Fortes, Meyer. 1976. "Some Reflections on Ancestor Worship in Africa." In M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, eds. African Systems of Thought: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Third International African Seminar in Salisbury, December 1960. London: Oxford University Press. Pp. 122-142. **Reader.**

Freud, Sigmund. 1950. Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Life of Savages and Neurotics. NY: W.W. Norton. Pp. 51-66. **Reader.**

#### **REPORT**

Yoon, Hyungsook. 1989 (Research:1985-86). Kinship, Gender, and Personhood in a Korean Village. Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University. Pp. 1-23, 111-151, 197-203. **Nancy.**

February 18, Thursday

Dix, Mortimer Griffin. 1977 (Research:1975). "The East Asian Country of Propriety": Confucianism in a Korean Village. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California, San Diego. Pp.1-37, 62-68, 81-91, 107-120, 149-171, 195-239, 601-612 **On Reserve in Ed/Soc Sci and Anthropology Reading Room.**

Asad, Talal. 1986. "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology." In James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 141-164. **Reader.**

de Bary, Wm. Theodore. 1988. "The Post-Confucian Era." In Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed. East Asian Civilizations: A Dialogue in Five Stages. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Pp. 105-122. **Reader.**

#### **REPORT**

Dix, Mortimer Griffin. 1977 (Research:1975). "The East Asian Country of Propriety": Confucianism in a Korean Village. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California, San Diego. Pp.373-594 in passim. **On Reserve in Ed/Soc Sci and Anthropology Reading Room.**

February 25, Thursday

Kendall, Laurel. 1985 (Research:1976) Shamans, Housewives and Other Restless Spirits.

Lewis, I.M. 1966. "Spirit Possession and Deprivation Cults." Man. Pp. 307-329. **Reader.**

Kim, Seong Nae. 1995. "The Iconic Power of Modernity: reading a Cheju Shaman's Life History and Initiation Dream." In Kenneth Wells, ed. South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. **Reader.**

Choi, Chungmoo. 1989. "The Artistry and Ritual Aesthetics of Urban Korean Shamans." Journal of Ritual Studies 3:2: 235-249. **Reader.**

March 4, Thursday

Abelmann, Nancy. 1996 (Research 1987-88). Echoes of the Past, Epics of Dissent.

Clifford, James. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths." In James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley:

University of California Press. Pp. 1-26. **Reader.**

**\*Brief presentations of paper plans I**

March 11, Thursday

Roger L. Janelli with Dawnhee Yim. 1993 (Research: 1987). Making Capitalism.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977 (1972). Outline of a Theory of Practice. NY: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1-30, 72-95. . **Reader.**

Geertz, Clifford. 1983. "'From the Native's Point of View.': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding." In Clifford Geertz, ed. Local Knowledge: Further essays in Interpretive Anthropology. NY: Basic Books. Pp. 55-72. . **Reader.**

Lee, June. **Reader #2.**

**REPORT**

*Yi Eunhee Kim. 1993 (Research: 1989-90). "Men's Community Relationships." In From Gentry to the Middle Class: The Transformation of Family, Community, and Gender in Korea. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago. Pp.244-271. **Reserve.***

**\*Brief presentations of paper plans II**

March 25, Thursday

Kendall, Laurel. Getting Married in Korea.

Bernstein, Gail Lee. 1991. "Introduction." In Gail Lee Bernstein, ed. Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 1-14. **Reader #2.**

**REPORT**

*Kim, Seung Kyung. 1997 (Research:1986-88). "The Myth of Social Mobility: Its creation and Reproduction among Women Workers." In Class Struggle or Family Struggle?: The Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea. NY: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 57-96 **Reserve.***

*Nelson, Laura. 1996 (Research 1991-92). Measured Excess; Gender, Status, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea. Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University. Pp. xi-xiv, 84-133. **Nancy.***

**\*Brief presentations of paper plans III**

April 1, Thursday

Kim, Seung Kyung. 1997 (Research:1986-88). "The Making of Working Class Identity: Students' Theories and Workers' Lives". In Class Struggle or Family Struggle?: The Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea. NY: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 129-169. **Reader.**

Kim, Hyun Mee. 1995. "The Politics of Working-Class Women: Centering of Marginalities" (Ch.6) Labor, Politics, and the Women Subject in Contemporary Korea. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Washington. **Reserve.**

## REPORT

Kim, Hyun Mee. 1995 (Research: 1992-93). "Becoming the Working Class" (Ch.5) Labor, Politics, and the Women Subject in Contemporary Korea. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Washington. **Reserve**.

Kim, Eun-Shil. 1993 (Research: 1990-91). The Making of the Modern Female Gender: The Politics of Reproductive Practices in Korea. Pd.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley. Pp. 168-249. **Reserve**.

April 8, Thursday

Yi Eunhee Kim. 1998. "Home is A Place to Rest: Constructing the Meaning of Work, Family, and Gender in the Korean Middle Class." Korea Journal 38.2:168-213. **Reader**.

Kim, Myung-hye. 1992. "Late Industrialization and Women's Work in Urban South Korea; An Ethnographic Study of Upper-Middle-Class Families." City & Society 6.2:156-173. **Reader**.

Park, Hyoung Cho (Cho Hyoung). 1973 (Research 1970-72). "Conclusion". In The Urban Middle Class Family in Korea. Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University. Pp. 302-318. **Reader**.

## REPORT

Yi Eunhee Kim. 1993. "Nuclearization of the Family." In From Gentry to the Middle Class: The Transformation of Family, Community, and Gender in Korea. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago. Pp.272-342. **Reserve**.

Kim, Eun-Shil. 1993. The Making of the Modern Female Gender: The Politics of Reproductive Practices in Korea. Pd.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley. Pp. 28-70. **Nancy**.

Park, Hyoung Cho (Cho Hyoung). 1973. In The Urban Middle Class Family in Korea. Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University. *In passim*. **Nancy**.

April 15, Thursday

Kim, Eun-Shil. 1997. "Women and the Culture Surrounding Childbirth." Korea Journal. 37:4:Pp. 174-194. **Reader**.

Ginsburg, Faye D. and Rayna Rapp. 1995. "Introduction: Conceiving the New World Order." In Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, eds. Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction. Pp. 1-12. **Reader**.

Abelmann, Nancy. 1997. "Narrating Selfhood and Personality in South Korea: Women and Social Mobility." American Ethnologist. 24.4:786-812. **Reader**.

Cho Haejoang. **Reader #2**.

Anagnost. Ann.1997. "Making History Speak." In National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp. 17-44. **Reader**.



## REPORT

*Kim, Eun-Shil. 1993. The Making of the Modern Female Gender: The Politics of Reproductive Practices in Korea. Pd.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley. Pp. 70-167. Nancy.*

April 22, Thursday

Yoon Taek-Lim. 1998. "Locality, Women, and History: Local History Research From a Feminist Perspective." Korea Journal 38:2:82-103. **Reader.**

Choi, Chungmoo. 1998. "Nationalism and the Construction of Gender in Korea." In Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi, eds. Dangerous Women: Gender & Korean Nationalism. NY: Routledge. Pp. 9-32. **Reader.**

Aretxaga, Begona. 1997. Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp. 3-23, 54-79. **Reader.**

April 29, Thursday

Choi, Chungmoo. 1997. "The Discourse of Decolonization and Popular Memory." In Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds. The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capitalism. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp. 461-484. **Reader.**

Grinker, Richard Roy. 1998. Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War. NY: St. Martin's Press. Pp. 1-48, 273-275. **Reader.**

Jager, Sheila Miyoshi. 1996. "A Vision for the Future; or, Making Family History in Contemporary South Korea." Positions: east asia cultures critique 4:1:31-58. **Reader.**