Democracy after Democratization: 
The State, Economy, and Civil Society in Contemporary Korea

Department of Sociology
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Course Description

This course surveys the trajectory of democracy in South Korea (hereafter Korea) since the mid-1980s. There is no doubt that democracy in Korea has been consolidated. However, the mere fact that Korean democracy is consolidated may disguise what kind of democracy it is and which democracy it is. In this course we will discuss the issues and problems with which Korean democracy is facing today. We will explore both what Korean mass public has expected and what Korean democracy has delivered. Thus, our chief concern will be about “which democracy?” rather than about “whether Korea is a democratic country or not?”

Throughout the course, our discussion will focus on “contextualized” understanding of the trajectory and characteristics of Korean democracy. In this sense, our discussion will differ from prevailing expositions of democracy in Korea, which have emphasized de-contextualized comparability across countries and over time. We will focus more on context-specific understanding of the continuities and changes in Korean democracy. We will explore several issues. Most prominent among them will be the ideological and ideational changes; socio-economic development and changes; distributional consequences and labor market changes; the state-civil society relations; political parties and party systems; interest groups and voluntary associations; the scope of inclusion in politics; and political participation. Through our discussions on these issues, this course aims at evaluating what Korean democracy has achieved, what it has yet to achieve, and why the paths toward democracy in Korea can be termed “conservative democratization.”

The course is divided into two parts. The first part examines historical conditions under which strong democratic movements emerged under the authoritarian rule buttressed by the Cold War anticommunism and authoritarian industrialization. We will also examine the patterns of transitions to democracy in Korea, with a particular focus on party systems and political representation. The second part explores how the Korean politics and society have changed since democratic transition, with a specific focus on the state, the market and civil society.
Course Requirements

Students are expected to read all of the required readings before class and be prepared to actively participate in class discussions.

Students are required to write two papers for the course. The mid-term paper will be a short, bibliographical essay and the final paper will be a research paper. Students are advised to consult with me about paper topics for the final research paper.

Textbooks

► Main Text:

Choi, Jang Jip, Democracy after Democratization (Seoul: Humanitas, 2005)

(The text is not available in the States. The lecturer will bring several copies of the text.)

► Further Reading:


Cumings, Bruce, Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1997), pp.139-393.


