

# Urbanization and Industrialization in East Asia



**Prof. Cuz Potter**

**Division of Global Korean Studies  
Korea University  
Spring 2026**

**Course: Urbanization and Industrialization in East Asia**

Course Number: GKSS212  
Lecture: Tuesdays 15:00–17:45 (KST) / 14:00–15:50 (CST)  
Location: 332 International Studies Hall (국제관) and via Zoom

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## **1 Introduction**

Urbanization is an fundamental aspect of the social and economic transformations that take place in the process of development. On the one hand, it is necessary for industrial and economic growth. On the other hand, the shift to urban living alters the ways we interact with each other. Using literature from sociology, urban planning, and geography, this course will explore how cities have been employed to foster economic development and how they have reshaped social relations. Though the role of cities in development will be explored primarily through an examination of Korea's development history, examples will also be drawn from throughout Asia and in some cases from the West.

Note that this class is being conducted with live streaming between Korea University and select universities in China under a cultural program sponsored by the Korea Foundation (한국국제교류재단). This creates both challenges and opportunities for communicating and learning that students may or may not find desirable.

## 2 Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be knowledgeable on:

1. A wide range of issues that face cities and their residents in the process of economic development.
2. The evolution of Asian cities' position in the global network of cities.
3. The ways in which economic, social, and urban forms mutually shape each other.
4. Differences between East Asian cities and Western cities
5. A representative sampling of theories explaining the urban process.
6. Application of those theories to concrete Asian cases, especially Korean cases.

## 3 Course Requirements

- You are expected to **read** all assigned readings. Lectures and discussions will be pursued under the assumption that you are already familiar with the readings' content.
- You are expected to attend class. I do not like to grade attendance, but the your university insists that I do. So attendance will be counted.
- There will be midterm and final examinations. Exams are closed book. The final exam will be cumulative.

## 4 Grading

### Weights

20%	Attendance
40%	Midterm Exam
40%	Final Exam

## 5 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable. If plagiarism is detected, you will receive a zero for the given assignment the first time. If you plagiarize a second time, you will fail the course. Please note that plagiarism is much broader than many students realize. You are encouraged to look at the excellent descriptions of plagiarism from Indiana University (<https://wts.indiana.edu/writing-guides/plagiarism.html>), Harvard University (<https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/avoiding-plagiarism-0>), and the University of Wisconsin (<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>), and you will be held to their standards. You can also look at my own website (<https://www.cuzproduces.com/producinganew/contents/plagiarism.php>).

## 6 Artificial Intelligence

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT is not allowed. Your writing and your arguments should be your own. (Note that I am not opposed to the use of AI for brainstorming, though I do not think it will help much.) Like plagiarism, if it is determined that you have used AI tools, you will receive a zero for the given assignment the first time. If you use AI a second time, you will fail the course.

## 7 Communication and meetings

You can communicate with me in several ways:

**Email:** I prefer to work through email. If you choose to contact me this way, be sure to include the class you are taking with me and your student ID number in your email. This makes it much easier for me to identify who you are and address any issues you might have, especially if they are related to grading or the LMS. Please be aware that I only check my email two or three times during the day, so I may not respond immediately. Also, I regularly—if not frequently—send updates out through the LMS. You are responsible for checking whatever email account you have connected to the LMS.

**Class:** You are also welcome to ask me questions when we meet for class. After class is always better. Before class I am typically preoccupied with getting everything ready.

## 8 Required texts

There are no required texts for this course. All readings will be available online and as a reader.

## 9 Schedule of classes

**Week 1 (03/03): No class. Only Korea University meets.**

### **Week 2 (03/10): Industrialization and urbanization**

This class will explore the tight connection between industrialization and urbanization. Specifically, we will discuss the economic and geographic factors that create a synergy between increasing concentrations of production and population.

1. Henri Lefebvre. 2003. *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, chapter 1.

Related readings:

1. David M. Gordon. 1978. "Capitalist Development and the History of American Cities." In *Marxism and the Metropolis: New Perspectives in Urban Political Economy*, edited by William K. Tabb and Larry Sawers, 25–63. New York: Oxford University Press.

### **Week 3 (03/17): Uneven development**

This class will introduce the theory of uneven spatial development and consider how it might explain the relationship between global developments and growth strategies at the national and urban level.

1. Neil Smith. 1984. *Uneven development: nature, capital, and the production of space*. New York, NY: Blackwell, chapter 4.

### **Week 4 (03/24): Smart cities and planetary urbanization**

**Note: Syllabus quiz due before class.**

In this class, we revisit Lefebvre's urban society hypothesis through the concept of planetary urbanization, what it means to have a right to the city, and how the development of smart cities in East Asia reflects the planetary. We will consider it as a new form of urban life and as a commodity.

1. Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid. 2015. "Towards a new epistemology of the urban?" *City* 19 (2-3): 151-182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2015.1014712>.

Related readings:

1. Simon Marvin and Andrés Luque-Ayala. 2017. "Urban Operating Systems: Diagramming the City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 41, no. 1 (January): 84-103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12479>.

### **Week 5 (03/31): Colonial planning: Japanese imperial planning in Korea**

This class will examine how imperial powers have designed cities in their colonies. In particular, we will examine how Japanese urban planning in Korea—and to some extent China—contributed to modernizing urban infrastructure and controlling the domestic population.

1. Wonsik Jeong. 2001. "The Urban Development Politics of Seoul as a Colonial City." *Journal of Urban History* 27 (2): 158-177.

### **Week 6 (04/07): The growth machine**

This class will explore how urban leaders can employ urban development to further the economic interests of their city. The growth machine concept is then applied to urban development in China.

1. John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch. 1987. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, chapter 3.

### **Week 7 (04/14): East Asian industrialization**

This class offers an overview of industrialization in East Asia and compares it to industrialization elsewhere in the world.

1. Bruce Cumings. 1984. "The origins and development of the Northeast Asian political economy: industrial sectors, product cycles, and political consequences." *International Organization* 38 (1): 1-40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300004264>.

## **Week 8 (04/21): Midterm exam.**

## **Week 9 (04/28): Urbanism as a way of life**

As populations increase and become more dense and industrialization alters work patterns, our social relations change. This class will explore how urbanization generates new freedoms and new communities. Discussion will draw on the challenges currently facing traditional markets in Korea.

1. Georg Simmel. 2002. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." In *The Blackwell City Reader*, edited by Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, 11–19. Blackwell Readers in Geography. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub.
2. Louis Wirth. 1969. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." In *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*, edited by Richard Sennett, 143–164. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

## **Week 10 (05/05): Holiday. No class.**

**Note: TA will arrange for you to watch Sangkyedong Olympics to make up for this missing class.**

## **Week 11 (05/12): Speed and the East Asian growth machine**

This class builds on the idea that one key feature of Asian cities is the speed with which they are built by exploring the unique institutional configurations that inform this rapid development. Case draws primarily from Chinese cities. In particular, it explores the role tax reforms and civil servant performance criteria have played in shaping the development strategies of Chinese cities.

1. Kyung-sup Chang. 2022. *The Logic of Compressed Modernity*. Newark: Polity Press. ISBN: 9781509553297, selections.

### **Related readings:**

1. Shiuh-shen Chien and Max D. Woodworth. 2018. "China's Urban Speed Machine: The Politics of Speed and Time in a Period of Rapid Urban Growth." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 42:723–737. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12610>.
2. Lei Wang, Cuz Potter, and Zhigang Li. 2014. "Crisis-induced reform, state-market relations, and entrepreneurial urban growth in China." *Habitat International* 41 (1): 50–57.

## **Week 12 (05/19): Building cities, building economies**

This class will examine the relationship between housing and national growth strategies. In particular, we will explore compare the role of the Korean state with that of the Singaporean state in housing provision.

1. Bae-Gyoon Park. 1998. "Where Do Tigers Sleep at Night? The State's Role in Housing Policy in South Korea and Singapore." *Economic Geography* 74 (3): 272–288. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-8287.1998.tb00116.x>.

## **Week 13 (05/26): Global and entrepreneurial cities**

This class will explore the evolution of world city networks over the course of globalization. Particular attention will be paid to the rise of Asian cities like Seoul and Shanghai in this network. This class will explore how globalization's decentralization has driven cities to become entrepreneurial entities that compete to attract residents, visitors, and firms.

1. Richard Child Hill and June Woo Kim. 2000. "Global Cities and Developmental States: New York, Tokyo and Seoul." *Urban Studies* 37, no. 12 (November): 2167–2195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980020002760>.

#### **Week 14 (06/02): Periurbanization, deindustrialization, and gentrification**

In the process of economic development, successful cities tend to lose manufacturing establishments to other cities with lower labor and land costs. They also tend to expand into agricultural land. As a result, industrial districts are abandoned and degenerate while farmlands are paved over. This class will explore efforts to regenerate declining neighborhoods, drawing on the success of Seoul's Cheonggyecheon restoration. Using examples of Hanoi and Hong Kong, the class will also ask whether the concept of gentrification is applicable in Asia.

1. Hyun Bang Shin. 2009. "Property-based redevelopment and gentrification: The case of Seoul, South Korea." *Geoforum* 40 (5): 906–917. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.06.009>.

#### **Week 15 (06/09): Socio-spatial change during East Asian industrialization**

As populations increase and become more dense and industrialization alters work patterns, our social relations change. This class will explore how industrialization and urbanization generate new freedoms, new constraints, and new communities.

1. Kyung-sup Chang. 2022. *The Logic of Compressed Modernity*. Newark: Polity Press. ISBN: 9781509553297, chapter 7.

Related readings:

1. Anne Allison. 2013. *Precarious Japan*. Durham: Duke University Press, chapter 2.
2. Kyung-Sup Chang. 1999. "Compressed modernity and its discontents: South Korean society in transtion." *Economy and Society* 28, no. 1 (February): 30–55. ISSN: 1469-5766. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085149900000023>.

#### **Week 16 (06/16): Final exam.**