

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 will take a short **quiz** about this syllabus before class in the fourth week. This quiz is designed to ensure that you are familiar with the syllabus, that you understand the class requirements, and that I can anticipate your interests. You will have unlimited time to take the quiz and are free to look at the syllabus as you take the quiz, but you will only be able to take it once.
- 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 Ministry of Education insists that I fail you if you miss more than one-third of the classes. So attendance will be counted.
- Each student is required to take a short **quiz** electronically by 12pm TUESDAY each week for **ten** out of the twelve weeks for which there are readings. This allows you to choose which weeks to take the quiz. If you take more than ten quizzes, your grade will be determined by the top scoring submissions.
- In preparation for the paper on an individually selected Asian city, students will prepare a **timeline** of significant events, periods, and transformations of their selected city. The timeline will highlight major spatial interventions, but it will also include major economic and social policies as well as political organization. The timeline should attempt to place the selected city's evolution within Lefebvre's historical framework.
- During the second half of the term, each student will write a **brief political economic history of an Asian city** employing concepts we have used in class to consider whether or not their city reflects Lefebvre's framework. In particular, these papers will address the ways in which urban and economic development have been intertwined. Doing so will require discerning historical phases in your city's development, which you should have established in your timeline. These papers should be 1000-1500 words long, excluding title pages and bibliographies. Note that no paper on the history of a city can be complete without including maps.

- There will be no midterm or final exam.

4 Grading

Deliverables	Weights
Syllabus quiz	3%
Quizzes	20%
Timeline	27%
Final paper	50%

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.

Office: Finally, you can meet me individually in my office. The obvious preferred time for this is my office hours. After all, this is what they are for! However, you can arrange via email or

in class to meet me at some other time. Unless it is a real emergency, please do not visit my office unannounced. It disrupts my work.

8 Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, or in need of support, services are available. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via <https://kuscc.korea.ac.kr/kuscc/index.do>.

9 Required texts

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

10 Schedule of classes

Week 1 (03/03): Introduction and overview of urbanization and industrialization in Asia

After introducing the class, the lecture will provide an initial overview of historical patterns of urbanization and industrialization in Asia relative to the rest of the world. We then ask whether Western and Eastern cities are different.

Week 2 (03/10): Industrialization and urbanization

Note: Nanjing joins.

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 period. No class.

Note: Timeline due.

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.

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. Shiu-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 transition." *Economy and Society* 28, no. 1 (February): 30–55. ISSN: 1469-5766. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085149900000023>.

Week 16 (06/16): Final exam period.

Note: Final paper due.