

MAKING PLACES IN SEOUL: HISTORY OF URBANISM & DEVELOPMENT

HOURS: WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY
2:55 - 4:15PM (CT) | 3:55 - 5:15PM (ET)
INSTRUCTOR: PIL HO KIM, PHD / KIM.2736@OSU.EDU



Characterized by an ever-increasing population, rampant pollution and jam-packed traffic, Seoul has been regarded as a stereotypical postcolonial East Asian megalopolis. Despite the newly found status as a “second-tier” global city, it has not entirely wiped away the chaotic, ugly and unattractive image of the old for residents and visitors alike. Lately, however, small yet meaningful changes are emerging in Seoul. With little or no emotional attachment to the grand, flashy urban monuments the national and the city governments have built, young artists and creative cultural entrepreneurs move around different places in the city looking for meanings, aesthetics and feelings. Rundown buildings and crooked alleyways are rediscovered and rehabilitated. Often deplored as ‘gentrification’, the ongoing urban changes in Seoul prove to be much more significant and complex than what they seem at the first blush.

Mainly focusing on five districts in Seoul (Jongno, Gangnam, Dongdaemun, Yongsan, and Mapo), this course will explore how they have come to represent different facets of Seoul’s urban culture in the past as well as in the present. We will see the birth of modern urban life going back to the colonial period, the reconstruction of the city from the utter destruction of the Korean War, the breakneck speed of urban development in the era of rapid economic growth, and the rise of the new urbanism around the beginning of the new millenium.

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