

THE CENTRE FOR KOREAN RESEARCH PROUDLY PRESENTS

"SOUTH KOREAN MILLENNIALS' MILITARY SERVICE AND NEOLIBERAL CALCULATIONS"

By Dr. Seung-kyung Kim
Indiana University Bloomington



FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 2019
3:30PM-5:00PM

MULTIPURPOSE ROOM, LIU INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL ISSUES
6476 NW MARINE DRIVE, VANCOUVER, BC V6T 1Z2

Abstract: Following the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the South Korean government embraced neoliberal policies, emphasizing economic competition, individual freedom, and meritocracy. The neoliberal ethos has become pervasive in many aspects of society including welfare, education, and social relations. Despite South Korea's neoliberal transformation, the country retains compulsory military service for young men, a practice that violates neoliberalism's principle of allowing individuals to make their own choices independent of state coercion. The neoliberal ethos instilled in Korean millennials that grew up during this period guides their decisions and strategies regarding military service despite the military being one of the least marketed sectors in South Korea.

Based on interviews conducted in May and June 2018, with 45 South Korean college students who had completed their military service between 2013 and 2017, this study examines how South Korean millennial men plan for and experience their compulsory military service, and how their neoliberal strivings manifest during that process.

Bio: Seung-kyung Kim is the Korea Foundation Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and Director of the Institute for Korean Studies at Indiana University. Dr. Kim is a cultural anthropologist by training. Her research focuses on gender, family, social movements, and transnational migration.

Her books include *Class Struggle or Family Struggle?: Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea* (Cambridge University Press), and *The Korean Women's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change* (Routledge), and *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (Routledge). She is a co-PI of the five-year global lab project, "Korean Millennials: Coming of Age in the Era of Inequality," funded by the Academy of Korean Studies.



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



CENTRE FOR
KOREAN RESEARCH