This course is designed to explore the visual cultures of North Korea. Why do we concern ourselves with the visual aspects of North Korean Culture? While North Korea has notoriously gained a reputation as the most isolated country in the world, there are many images inundating media, in news or in popular culture. Images are the most prominent way through which we gain knowledge about North Korea, but they are not transparent mediums and are in need of interpretation. Throughout the semester, we will explore various ways through which North Korea uses visual mediums to showcase its state power and ideology, to write history, and to represent memory to the people of North Korea and to the world. We will also examine the representation of North Korea from perspective of the defectors as well as the Western spectators and even tourists. The genres that we will examine include art, architecture, murals, posters, stamps, illustrations, animation, photography, film, opera, mass games, museum, cemetery, and processions/parades. Students are expected to develop a critical perspective on the politics of representation and the role of the mediums in use.

This is a new course offered jointly by Ohio State University, University of Wisconsin, and Indiana University.

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