

**UC San Diego
Transnational Korean Studies**

Presents

**The Gendered Politics of Socialist
Consumption in North Korea
1953-65**

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

4:00pm - 6:00pm, Green Table Room, Sun God Lounge, Price Center

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Abstract: How was ‘proper’ consumption conceived in the newly emergent socialist order of North Korea? This paper argues that despite the desire of the Party-state to represent a population united around the Kim family and the (not unrelated) tendency of foreign observers to see North Korea as an extreme case of totalitarianism, there was in fact no straightforward answer to this question. Rather, the realm of consumption captured many of the tensions and anxieties that underpinned the revolutionary politics of this postcolonial state and social order. The ambivalence at high levels of the Party-state on consumption offered a degree of manoeuvring room in the local social worlds of the population. Through such issues as home décor, clothing fashion, and outdoor leisure, lower level writers and commentators sought to work out new notions of masculinity and femininity as well as class as one way of coming to terms with the (im)possibilities of mass utopia.

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