



# 2016 September Workshop

## Seoul-KOTESOL Chapter

Rm. 304

**FREE ADMISSION! ON-SITE REGISTRATION!**

- Topic:** *Is this a Safe Space?: Using Controversial Topics in EFL Classes* by Gordon West, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul
- Venue:** Rm. 304, Myungshingwan, Main Campus, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, South Korea
- Date/Time:** September 24 (Saturday), 3:00 - 5:00PM
- Order:** 2:00 - 2:50pm ~ Networking (greet and meet) & onsite registration  
3:00 - 5:00pm ~ Workshop  
5:01 - 6:00pm ~ Coffee and chat (a coffee shop around the venue)
- Contact:** Dr. Ian Done D. Ramos, President  
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<http://www.koreatesol.org/seoul>
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### Abstract

Instructors often use controversial topics in EFL classes. These have multiple pedagogical purposes. They encourage communicative language use in the classroom and stimulate critical thinking. For instructors with a critical perspective, which takes a more expansive view of language teaching, controversial topics may be used as a way of helping students examine their own beliefs and perspectives (Crookes, 2013). Other times, topics or materials that instructors use in class may become unexpectedly controversial or provoke surprising emotional reactions from students. One of the difficulties that instructors often face is how to effectively mediate when class discussions or debates become more emotionally charged than they anticipated. This workshop uses frameworks laid out by Benesch (2012) on teachers as emotion workers, and Kubota (2014) on using a poststructuralist versus an empathy building approach to structuring discussions around controversial topics in EFL classes. The workshop will involve three parts. First the reasons for using controversial topics will be discussed along with the question of imposition of beliefs and teacher neutrality in class.

Ways of negotiating the curriculum and giving students more control over topics will be shared. The facilitator will then share situations from his own teaching and research to illustrate ways to apply Kubota's (2014) reflection frameworks. Then participants will share their own examples and work with sample situations to construct their own mediation plans with the goal of having creating safe spaces for discussion in classes where controversial topics can still be vigorously debated.

## Biography



Gordon West currently teaches in the Sookmyung Women's University YL/PL-TESOL programs. Previously, he taught at an institute for young learners and has had experience teaching various age levels in both ESL and EFL contexts. He holds an MA in Second Language Studies from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His research interests include critical approaches to teaching and research, narrative inquiry, and teacher education.

For the venue, please see below:

