

2025 Ewha International Summer College

Contemporary Korean Cinema

Instructor: Yung Bin Kwak (PhD, U. of Iowa/ Visiting Professor @ Ewha Womans University)

Class time: Mon thru Thur

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This class is designed to introduce students to contemporary Korean culture and history thru cinema. By watching and discussing two films per week, it seeks to provide a broad purview of Korea at its most historical, helping you better grasp how South Korea has arrived the present. Rather than offering a mere compilation of factual knowledge, however, it seeks to challenge common assumptions about Korean Culture being ‘Totally Unique’ or ‘Absolutely Other.’ To that end, it will engage with key aspects of modern Korean history such as the Korean War, the Gwangju Massacre, Confucianism, comfort women, crisis of masculinity and the rise of feminism, and last but not least, globalization, focusing on heated debates and recent controversies about them. Set against this backdrop, your understanding of contemporary Korea and Korean Cinema, I hope, will never be the same.

Class is conducted in English. No prior knowledge of Korea or the Korean language is expected.

Class Format and Requirements

Attendance (10%) + Participation (20%)

One Research Paper (30%)

Final Presentation (40%)

Textbook: There is no main textbook. Readings will be provided in PDF or via internet links.

Class Policy: You are expected to complete the assigned readings and to *bring those readings to class*, prepared to think aloud and participate in discussion and debate. Your engaged presence is *essential* to the success of the course. Attendance is mandatory —*your third unexcused absence will automatically result in a FAIL*. If for any reason you cannot attend class, you should inform me in advance. In the case of absences, only documented excuses (doctor's note, jury duty, and so on) will be accepted.

Classroom Expectations and Academic Integrity: Use of mobile phones and laptops in class, except as note-taking devices, is *strictly prohibited*. Repeated provocations (however unintentional) will lead to an irreparable damage to the final grade. The work you turn in should be your own original work. Defined as the submission or presentation of work, in any form, that is not a student's own, without acknowledgment of the sources, plagiarism is a serious offense and can result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion from the College.

Religious Observances Policy: Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance which conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me in person to discuss appropriate accommodations.

COURSE SCHEDULE*

(*Schedule and materials are subject to change)

M Introduction to the Course and (New) Korean Cinema

Sangjoon Lee, “Rediscovering Korean Cinema”, in *Rediscovering Korean Cinema*, Ann Arbor, MI, U. of Michigan Press, 2019, 1-12.

Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War*, Intro. Columbia University Press, 2010.

T The Korean War & the Division System of Two Koreas II

Assigned Viewing: *JSA* (Park Chan-wook, 2000)

Paik Nak chung, Ch.1 ‘Making the Movement for Overcoming the Division System a Daily Practice,’ In *The Division System in Crisis: Essays on Contemporary Korea*, Berkeley & LA: U. of California Press, 2011, 3-11. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0n74x461>

Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War*, Ch.1, Columbia University Press, 2010.

W The Korean War & the Division System of Two Koreas II

Assigned Viewing: *Ode to My Father* (Yoon Je-kyoon, 2014)

Bruce Cummings, “Epilogue to (De)Memorializing the Korean War: A Critical Intervention.” (2015)
<https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/e-journal/articles/cumings.pdf>

Kyung Hyun Kim, “*Ode to My Father* (2014): Korean War through Cinema,” in *Rediscovering Korean Cinema*, 502-513.

Th The Korean War & the Division System of Two Koreas III

Assigned viewing: *12.12 The Day* (Kim Sung-su, 2023)

“The bereaved mothers who were painted as North Korean spies,” *Hankyoreh* 5.19.2016
http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/744574.html

Hun Joon Kim, “What Is Transitional Justice and Why Is It Relevant to South Korea?” *SSK Human Rights Brief* 1.4 (Dec. 2013) http://sskhumanrights.org/brief/2013_04.pdf

M (Eternal Return of) Gwangju

Assigned Viewing: *A Taxi Driver* (Jang Hoon, 2017)

Tim Shorrock, 'The Lasting Significance of Kwangju,' *FPIF* 6.10.2010
http://fpif.org/the_lasting_significance_of_kwangju/

'Dying for democracy: 1980 Gwangju uprising transformed South Korea,' *Japan Times*
5.17.2014 <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/05/17/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/dying-democracy-1980-gwangju-uprising-transformed-south-korea/>

T Korea is East Asia is Confucianism?

Assigned Viewing: *YMCA Baseball Team* (Kim Hyeon-Seok, 2002)

"Culture is Destiny: Conversations with Lee Kuan Yew," *Foreign Affairs* (Mar/Apr, 1994) https://paulbacon.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/zakaria_lee.pdf

Kim Dae-Jung, "Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values," *Foreign Affairs* (Nov/Dec, 1994) <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/50557/kim-dae-jung/is-culture-destiny-the-myth-of-asias-anti-democratic-values>

Jieun Choi, "Stop Attributing Everything to Confucianism," *Korean Exposé*, Jan. 24, 2018 <https://www.koreaexpose.com/stop-attributing-everything-in-east-asia-to-confucianism/>

W (Im)Memory of Colonialism

Assigned Viewing: *I Can Speak* (Kim Hyeon-Seok, 2017)

Pyong Gap Min, "Controversies over Park Yu-ha's Book. Another Twist in the Comfort Women Redress Movement," *Georgetown Journal of Asian Affairs* (Spring 2017): 58-65.
https://asianstudies.georgetown.edu/sites/asianstudies/files/documents/gjaa_3.2_min.pdf

"Reexamining the "Comfort Women" Issue: An Interview with Yoshimi Yoshiaki," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 13, Issue 1, No. 1, January 5, 2015. <http://japanfocus.org/-Yoshimi-Yoshiaki/4247>

Th 'Are You Korean (Enough)'

Assigned Viewing: *Ode to the Goose* (Zhang Lu, 2018)

'How Jasmine Lee, One Of The Most Hated Women In Korea, Is Changing The Country,' *The Huffington Post Korea* 5.7.2015
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/07/jasmine-lee-korea_n_7214186.html

'Russians upset over gang-lynched Russian-Korean boy,' *The Korea Times* Nov. 23, 2018 https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/11/177_259196.html

Iain Watson, "Paradoxical Multiculturalism in South Korea," *Asian Politics & Policy* 4.2 (2012): 233-258.

M (Re)Booting Feminism I

Assigned Viewing: *Take Care of My Cat* (Jeong Jae-eun, 2001)

Richard Howson & Brian Yecies, "Korean Cinema's Female Writers-Directors and the "Hegemony of Men", *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2015): 14-22. http://www.genderonline.cz/uploads/36b671012aad6a43664ccc7f2245f3e06ea16624_115-web-stati-howson-yecies.pdf

Michelle Cho, "Take Care of My Cat (2001): The Architectonics of Female Subjectivity in Post-crisis South Korea," in *Rediscovering Korean Cinema*, 358-370.

T (Re)Booting Feminism II

Assigned Viewing: *The Truth Beneath* (Lee Kyoung-mi, 2017)

'Male Rights Activist Dies in Publicity Stunt on Han River Bridge,' *Koreabang* 8.1.2013 <http://www.koreabang.com/2013/stories/male-rights-activist-commits-suicide-on-han-river-bridge.html>

'Korean men feeling besieged by #MeToo are revolting against a novel about a stay-at-home mom,' Quartz Mar. 29, 2018. <https://qz.com/1240411/in-the-age-of-metoo-korean-men-are-revolting-against-the-feminist-novel-kim-ji-young-born-1982/>

W ReCasting Korean Cinema ?

Assigned Viewing: *Decision to Leave* (Chan-wook Park, 2022)

Darcy Parquet, "What I Learned Translating "Decision to Leave"", Dec. 19, 2022 [mubi https://mubi.com/en/notebook/posts/what-i-learned-translating-decision-to-leave](https://mubi.com/en/notebook/posts/what-i-learned-translating-decision-to-leave)

Th Unworking Work(ers)

Assigned Viewing: *Factory Complex* (Im Heungsoon, 2015)

Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War*, Ch.2, Columbia University Press, 2010.

Se-woong Koo, "What Happened at Samsung Factory in Vietnam?" *Korea Exposé* Mar.2, 2017. <https://www.koreaexpose.com/riot-report-samsung-factory-vietnam/>

M Global Korea Cinema?

Assigned Viewing: *Squid Game* 1(or 2)

Hyejung Ju, “Deterritorialisation of Korean TV dramas in “Netflix Originals”: “We are living in the *Squid Game* world”” *Critical Studies in Television*, 19(4), 429-449.

T Presentation I

W Presentation II & Class Wrap-Up