Korean Popular Culture in the Inter-Asian and Global Context

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Office hours: tba

Course Description

This course will look into the shaping of South Korean popular culture not merely on a national scale, but also in its complex inter-Asian and global historical context. Through the lens of popular culture, we can observe how the nation responded to the inroads of modern western culture during the early modern period, especially under Japanese colonial rule; how the politics of the Cold War and American hegemony affected them; how Korean popular culture has evolved and adapted to the rapid socioeconomic changes and intertwined with other Asian popular cultures such as Chinese (first from Hong Kong and Taiwan and later from mainland) and Japanese.

In addition to academic texts, this course will make use of a wealth of materials from literature, music, film, TV dramas, cartoon, animation, and sports. In terms of both export industry and lifestyle practice, the Korean pop culture phenomenon – commonly known as the ‘Korean Wave’ or Hallyu – has come to enjoy global recognition. We will explore the significance of popular culture in the globalized political-economic landscapes, and examine the role of policy intervention in cultivating the media-culture industry. In light of South Korea’s newfound soft power and its global impact that reaches even North Korea, we will also look at how popular culture has been mediating the complex, tormented relationship between North and South Korea.

Required Texts and Course Materials

Textbook: Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe eds., The Korean Popular Culture Reader Duke University Press, 2014 (hereafter KPCR) – available as an e-book at the OSU library. All course readings listed on the syllabus are required and readily accessible on Carmen. Students are expected to finish all required readings before coming to class.

Assignments and Grading

Pop quizzes
There is no written midterm or final exam, but a total of six pop quizzes will be taken over the semester. The lowest quiz score will be dropped and the remaining five scores will count for 35% of the final grade (i.e., 7% per quiz). No makeup quiz will be given.
Documentary film review papers
All students are required to write a minimum of 400-word review paper for each of the three documentary films screened in class. Each paper counts for 5% of the final grade. Review paper is due in the next class following each screening. Late submission will be penalized by 1% point deduction for each day past due.

Final research project: presentation and term paper
All students are required to conduct a group or individual project, which consists of a proposal, a class presentation and a final term paper. Students can form a group (of no more than four) to do a project together. Students will choose a topic, seek for instructor’s approval by Week 5, and then write a short proposal of about 500-600 words in length (about 2 double-spaced pages) including a list of references by Week 9. Presentation should be about 10-15 minutes long for an individual and 15-20 minutes long for a group. Final paper should be at minimum 2,500 words (about 10 double-spaced pages) for single-author (4,000 for two 6,000 for three, and 8,000 for four co-authors) including proper citations, endnotes and bibliography. The final project counts for 35% of the final grade: 5% for proposal, 5% for presentation, and 25% for term paper.

Class attendance and participation
An absence will be counted as an absence regardless of the reason, and will be excused only upon the instructor’s discretion for extenuating circumstances with verifiable written document on a case by case basis. A missing class will result in 1% deduction from attendance and participation, which counts for 15% of the final grade. Leaving early without instructor approval constitutes an absence. Those who are late (arriving well after class begins) will have 0.5% deduction. And the same 0.5% penalty will be assessed on those who distract themselves and other students using any digital device (cell phone, tablet, laptop, etc.) for non-class purposes.

Grading scheme

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
<th>Maximum Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
<td>83-86.9</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.9</td>
<td>73-76.9</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.9</td>
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<td>E</td>
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Academic misconduct
It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct (The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations). Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct at [http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).
Disability services
The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.
Course Schedule (subject to change)

**Week 1. Overview: Globalization and Popular Culture**
Course introduction

**Week 2. The Rise of the Korean Wave and K-Pop**
Documentary screening #1: Hark-Joon Lee (2012) *9 Muses of Star Empire*

**Week 3. East Asian Pop Culture? An Inter-Asian Perspective**
Documentary review paper #1 due

**Week 4. ‘Mass Culture’ at the Gate of Modernity: Colonial Modernity and Popular Culture**
Quiz #1

**Week 5. Colonial Legacy and Cultural Nationalism**
Final project topic due
Jung Hwan Cheon, “Bend It Like a Man of Chosun: Sports Nationalism and Colonial Modernity of 1936,” *KPCR*, pp. 199-227

**Week 6. From Rags to Riches: American Dreams in the Cold-War East Asia**
Quiz #2
Week 7. North Korea’s Self-Image in Popular Literature and Propaganda Arts

Week 8. Portrayals of North Korea in South Korean and Western Media
Documentary review paper #2 due

Week 9. Sports and National Identity: Olympic Games, World Cup Soccer and beyond
Quiz #3; Final project proposal due

Week 10. Plastic Surgery Nation: Beauty and Body Images

Week 11. Gender and Sexuality in Korean Popular Culture

Week 12. South Korean Cyberculture: The World’s Most Wired Society?
Quiz #4
Inkyu Kang, “It All Started with a Bang: The Role of PC Bangs in South Korea’s Cyberculture,” KPCR, pp. 55-75
Documentary screening #3: Steven Dhoedt (2013) State of Play

Documentary review paper #3 due; Quiz #5

**Week 14. Beyond East Asia: Global Reach of K-Pop Fandom**

*Documentary review paper #3 due*


**Week 15. Student Presentations**

*Quiz #6*

*Final project presentations*

*Final paper due: tba*