

EALC1379: ART, POP, AND BELONGING

(Or, How to Talk About Korean Popular Culture)

First-Year Seminar, Fall 2024
MW 3:30-5pm | Location TBA
Prof. So-Rim Lee (sorimlee@sas.upenn.edu)
Office hours: MW 1-2:30pm at Williams 806



COURSE DESCRIPTION

From K-pop and film to fashion, cosmetics, food, and art, South Korean culture seems to be everywhere. In this course, we will discuss how the cadences of contemporary Korean art and culture shifted in tandem with the sheer amount of historical and social change experienced by the Korean people since the second half of the twentieth century. Discussing art, photography, music, and writing, we will analyze how these cultural representations activate a sense of belonging and social coalition for marginalized communities in South Korea. We will be treated to in-person guest-lectures from the Philadelphia-based Korean artist Kay Seohyung Lee, and the anti-displacement activist and author of *Defying Displacement*, Andrew Lee.

Addressing topics such as developmental dictatorships and displacement, queer politics of visibility, and cultural transnationalism in the neoliberal era, we will pay particular attention to the structures of power and the role of the “other” in the construction of contemporary South Korea. In doing so, we will also rethink our own positionality in approaching Korean popular culture as North America-based scholars at a geographic, cultural, and social distance. Towards the end of the semester, we will take a class trip to a gallery opening. All course materials will be in English; no prior knowledge of Korean language is required.

OBJECTIVES

This course fulfills the University's Arts & Letters sector, which encompasses studying the means and meaning of visual arts, literature, and music, together with the criticism surrounding them. By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify major themes and issues in contemporary South Korean culture and society.
- Understand the material conditions and social contexts of contemporary Korean art and popular culture, with an awareness of our roles as conscious consumer-scholars encountering their transnational circulation.
- Articulate your findings through the learning process in creative and analytical ways.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Grace M. Cho, *Tastes Like War: A Memoir* (Feminist Press, 2021)
2. Andrew Lee, *Defying Displacement: Urban Recomposition and Social War* (AK Press, 2024)

Unless otherwise noted, all other readings will be uploaded on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS

Active participation: You are expected to demonstrate respect for your fellow students, the instructor, and the people whose stories you will learn about this semester. To do this, you must show up to class on time, having finished the readings and assignments and ready to listen to your fellow students whose opinions may differ from yours. Sometimes, I will ask you to write reflections towards the end of each class as “exit tickets.” You must notify me in advance regarding any absence by email. More than three unannounced absences will result in a F. Laptops, tablets, and electronic reading devices are permitted in class for the sole purpose of consulting class materials or taking lecture notes. If caught using electronic devices for non-course related purposes during class, you will be asked to demonstrate a K-pop dance in front of everyone.

*Tip: For the weeks that require you to watch films in your time, make sure to watch the film prior to doing the reading (otherwise you will regret it, because readings contain spoilers!).

Weekly show-and-tell: On Mondays of each week, you will be asked to share a visual object or text related to the given prompt on a shared [Class Notebook](#). The prompts will be pulled from the

materials assigned for the week, and given to you in advance so you can keep it in mind as you do your readings. You will be asked to briefly introduce your findings to fellow students.

Weekly Reflect-and-Respond: From Week 2 to Week 14, write a short (300-400 words) post on Canvas reflecting the readings, discussions, films, guest lectures, or anything else you've learned that week. You are to upload the posts by every Friday, 5 PM, so that everyone will have time to read them and write a short response (100 words) to at least one post by that same Friday, 10 PM. Unlike the show-and-tell which demonstrates your preliminary thoughts to the materials that week, the reflect-and-respond assignment will enable us to wrap-up our discussions and learnings each week. Each week's topic and reading will be different, and I encourage you to be creative as you wish: for instance, you may want to incorporate videos, external links, an audio-visual file, or some combination of all of these. For a full grade, you must have at least ten posts and responses (out of thirteen) by the end of semester.

Study Group Presentations: On Wednesday classes starting Week 4, we will have study group presentations (<30 minutes) on a designated topic for the week. Study groups will be 2-3 people who will also function as your study buddies outside of the classroom—please get to know each other! Make ways to communicate and share your thoughts and ideas. For the presentation assignment, please refer to Appendix A for more information on the group presentation.

Final Paper Project: For this threefold project, you will 1) meet with me to consult on a topic of your choice, 2) submit a one-page abstract and bibliography, and 3) submit a final paper of at least 2000 words (approx. 8 double-spaced pages) based on ONE of the three prompts:

- Perform a compelling analysis on two or more artworks by a single artist, or by different artists. What themes do they address, and how?
- Discuss how gender, sexuality, and/or race is represented in K-pop. Make sure to incorporate a detailed visual analysis of two case studies.
- Write a well-composed film review that comparatively analyzes two Korean films.
- Write about any other topic, in consultation with me.

Think of this paper as a well-argued paper that involves research, detailed visual analysis, and at least two reliable references to buttress your point. You must also give the paper a good title! Use the key themes, concepts, and strategies we discussed in this course to inform you to write a compelling academic paper about an interesting topic.

GRADING CRITERIA

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

	Weekly Reflect-and-Respond: 20%
Participation and Engagement (60%)	Study Group Presentations: 20%
Weekly Show-and-Tell: 20%	

Research Project (40%)

Meeting with Prof. Lee: 10%

One-page abstract/bibliography: 10%

Final Essay (1800-2000 words): 20%

STUDENT RESOURCES**Guideline for Written Assignments:**

1. Fonts and Spacing: Single- or double-spaced 12 pt Times New Roman or 11 pt Calibri.

2. Citations and bibliography: Whenever you refer to the readings, you should be making proper citations (Chicago OR MLA styles all fine, but make sure to be consistent). At the end of your papers, include a written bibliography (also called references) of the items you reference/cite.

- Purdue Online Writing Lab
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/index.html

3. Romanizing Korean to English: Korean is a difficult language to Romanize, not the least because of its abundance of vowels. Different systems of Romanization developed over time, and two are now internationally accepted: McCune-Reischauer System and the Revised Romanization System. The South Korean government has adopted the latter, but McCune-Reischauer remains the preferred system in Anglophone academia. All student work should try to adhere to either the Revised Romanization system or the McCune-Reischauer system (while it does not matter which one you choose to use, please make an effort to adhere to one style). On that note, you will notice that most of the readings for our course adhere to the McCune-Reischauer system.

- McCune-Reischauer converter: <http://laotouzi.de/kor/>
- Revised Romanization converter: <http://www.codywatts.com/romanizer/>

Writing and Presentation Resources and Assistance: The Marks Family Writing Center works with students enrolled in any course with writing assignments. You may arrange a meeting with the resident writing tutor for free one-on-one sessions to brainstorm ideas or learn strategies to draft, revise, or improve the structure of the academic essay. I highly recommend visiting them: <http://writing.upenn.edu/critical/wc/>

Academic Integrity: You are expected to comply with the University's regulations on academic integrity. If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak to the instructor before an assignment is due. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating on an exam (e.g., copying others' answers, providing help to others, using a crib sheet) or plagiarism of a paper or exercise (e.g., taking material from readings without citation, copying another student's work). Failure to maintain academic integrity will result in a loss of credit for that

assignment—at a minimum. Other penalties may also apply.
<https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>

Weingarten Center: The Weingarten Center offers a variety of resources to support all Penn students in reaching their academic goals. All services are free and confidential. To contact the Weingarten Center, call 215-573-9235. The office is located in Stouffer Commons, 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300.

Learning consultations and learning strategies workshops support students in developing more efficient and effective study skills and learning strategies. Learning specialists work with undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to address time and project management, academic reading and writing, note-taking, problem-solving, exam preparation, test-taking, self-regulation, and flexibility. Undergraduates can also take advantage of free on-campus tutoring for many Penn courses in both drop-in and weekly contract formats. Tutoring may be individual or in small groups. Tutors will assist with applying course information, understanding key concepts, and developing course-specific strategies. Tutoring support is available throughout the term but is best accessed early in the semester. First-time users must meet with a staff member; returning users may submit their requests online.

The University of Pennsylvania is committed to the accessibility of its programs and services. Students with a disability or medical condition can request reasonable accommodations through the Weingarten Center website. Disability Services determines accommodations on an individualized basis through an interactive process, including a meeting with the student and a review of their disability documentation. Students who have approved accommodations are encouraged to notify their faculty members and share their accommodation letters at the start of each semester. Students can contact Disability Services by calling 215-573-9235.

Requirements for COVID-19: I encourage everyone to do their best on keeping each other safe in our community—Stay home if you feel sick, and always reach out for accommodation.

Inclusiveness: This course involves participation from students of diverse experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives of the world. We will treat the classroom as a brave space where students can be present, acknowledge one another's differences of race, gender, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, nationalities, and develop critical thinking through honest, courageous conversations. Discussions in this class will focus on developing skills on making constructive criticism and comments that use factual statements free from prejudices. When expressing personal ideas and opinions, students should always navigate the boundaries between potential harassment of peers and academic freedom. Should you, at any point during the semester, experience any discomfort or disagreement from interactions that take place in the class, please come talk to me. If you encounter sexual harassment, misconduct, assault, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability, please contact the Title IX Coordinator and Executive Director Sam Starks (sstarks@upenn.edu). If you report this to a faculty or staff member, they

must notify the Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may request confidentiality from the University).

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I. Tracing Korean Popular Culture, 1920s-1990s

Week 1. Korean Popular Culture?

Aug 28: John Storey, “What Is Popular Culture?”

Week 2. Generational Critique

Sep 2: No class

Sep 4: Cho Haejoang, “The Spec Generation Who Can’t Say ‘No’: Overeducated and Underemployed Youth in Contemporary South Korea,” *positions: asia critique* 23:3 (2015): 437-62.

Week 3. After the Korean War...

Sep 9: Grace M. Cho, *Tastes Like War: A Memoir*

Sep 11: *Tastes Like War* continued

Week 4. South Korea’s 1960s

Sep 16: Kim Ki-young, *The Housemaid* (1960), 111 min. (https://youtu.be/-J_HTZFC32s)
Chris Berry, “The Housemaid (1960): Possessed by the Dispossessed”

Sep 18: Kyung Moon Hwang, “Striving for Revolution in 1960s South Korea”
Study group presentations begin

Week 5. Food, Identity, and Belonging

Sep 23: Yang Young-Kyun, “Jajangmyeon and Junggukjip: The changing position and meaning

of Chinese food and Chinese restaurants in Korean society,” *Korea Journal* 45.2 (2005): 60-88.

Sep 25: Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, “The Global Hansik Campaign and the Commodification of Korean Cuisine,” *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, 363-84.

Week 6. Gwangju 1980 and the Minjung Movement

Sep 30: Watch *A Taxi Driver* (2017) dir. Jang Hoon (streaming on major platforms)
Kyung Moon Hwang, “South Korea’s Extended Democratization”

Oct 2: Dong-No Kim, “Social Grievances and Social Protests against the Oppressive State”

Week 7. Asian Financial Crisis and the Beginning of Hallyu

Oct 7: Inkyu Kang, “It All Started with a Bang”

Oct 9: Roald Maliangkay, “The Popularity of Individualism: Seo Taiji Phenomenon in the 90s.”

Part II. Minoritarian Voices, Mainstream Subversions

Week 8. Kay Seohyung Lee: Art as Survival

Oct 14: See the artist’s website, especially “about” and “work”

Oct 16: Guest lecture from the artist

Week 9. “Hallyu 2.0”: Culture, Technology, and Fandom

Oct 21: Marcus Tan, “K-Contagion: Sound, Speed, and Space in ‘Gangnam Style.’”

Oct 23: Solee I. Shin, “How K-pop Went Global: Digitization and the Market-Making of Korean Entertainment Houses”

Week 10. Queer Art and Activism (Meet with Prof. Lee by end of week)

Oct 28: Watch “Eurat Papa’ YouTube series (3 episodes total; each episode 15 min.)

Ep. 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvQFYdaEb38>

Ep. 2: <https://youtu.be/IiTpnBh2pUI?si=nZ1vJR2oaQErKEXh>

Ep. 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oCD3DJRXt8>

Camillie Sung, “Reflections on an Exhibition of Queer Art in Korea*”

<https://queerasia.com/2018/01/30/reflections-on-an-exhibition-of-queer-art/>

Oct 30: Tari Young-Jung Na, Ju Hui Judy Han, Se-Woong Koo “The South Korean Gender System: LGBTI in the Contexts of Family, Legal Identity, and the Military.”

Week 11. Community and Displacement

Nov 4: Andrew Lee, *Defying Displacement: Urban Recomposition and Social War*

Nov 6: Andrew Lee, *Defying Displacement* continued; Guest lecture from the author

Week 12. Gender and Sexuality in K-pop

Nov 11: John Seabrook, “Factory Girls.” *The New Yorker*, October 1, 2012.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/10/08/factory-girls-2>

Nov 13: Chuyun Oh and David C. Oh, “Unmasking Queerness: Blurring and Solidifying Queer Lines through K-pop Cross-Dressing.” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 50.1 (2017): 9-29.

(Abstract and bibliography due in class)

Week 13. Racial Politics of K-pop

Nov 18: S. Heijin Lee, “The Politics and Promises of ‘Gangnam Style,’” in *Pop Empires: Transnational and Diasporic Flows of India and Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019), p. 97-120.

Nov 20: So-Rim Lee, “From K-pop to Z-pop: The Pan-Asian Production, Consumption, and Circulation of Idols,” *The Cambridge Companion to K-pop* (2023), 154-71.

Michelle Cho, “BTS for BLM: K-pop, Race, and Transcultural Fandom.” *Celebrity Studies* 13.2 (2022): 170-179.

*THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS ON NOV. 25

Week 14.

Dec 2:

Dec 4: No Class; moved to Kay Seohyung Lee's exhibition opening on Dec 6

*Dec 6: Kay Seohyung Lee Solo Show Opening

Week 15. Conclusion

Dec 9: Wrap-up—bring snacks!

*Final essays due on Canvas (“Assignments”) by Wednesday, Dec. 18, by 8PM EST

Appendix: Study Group Presentation Topics

In groups of 2-3, take over the class for up to 30 minutes to discuss the keywords given below. While how you organize your presentation is up to you, I suggest using multimedia aid on slides such as images, videos songs, or any other material objects to illuminate your findings to the class. An ideal presentation should introduce what the keyword is, its historical and social context or biography (if a person), and if relevant, connect it to the readings and/or films of the week in an organized manner. Don't be scared of public speaking—our goal is to create a safe space for everyone to think aloud together on. This is a collaborative exercise, and study groups are put in place so that we learn together. You are not expected to be an “expert” in these keywords, but rather, to demonstrate that you've researched what they are as a group.

Week 4 (Sep 18)	1) Nam June Paik 2) Lee Ufan
Week 5 (Sep 25)	1) Jajangmyeon and Jjamppong 2) Budae Jjigae (“Army Stew”)
Week 7 (Oct 9)	1) Seo Taiji and Boys 2) SM Entertainment
Week 9 (Oct 23)	1) Cover Dances and Flash Mobs 2) DEARU “bubble” app
Week 10 (Oct 30)	1) Ibanjiha 2) Park Youngsook
Week 12 (Nov 13)	1) Gender/sexual minorities in K-pop 2) Queerbaiting in K-pop
Week 13 (Nov 20)	1) Racism and/or cultural appropriation in K-pop 2) Black Lives Matter and K-pop fandom