

KOR 3415 Syllabus (Fall 2026)

Korea in Media: K-pop, Film, and Drama. 3 credits.

Tue-Thurs 9:30 - 10:45 PM, Skiles 371

Instructor Information

Instructor
Keung Yoon Bae

Email
kbae38@gatech.edu

Office Hours
Wednesdays, 9 - 11 AM
Virtual/in-person, by appointment

General Information

Description

South Korea is one of the most media-represented countries in the world. Korean film, music, television, and online media have been exported around the globe to audiences worldwide, and in this course we will use these media works as useful windows for better understanding the country as a whole, as well as Korea's impact on the global media landscape. We will deconstruct various Korean media works and contextualize them in Korean history to understand how and why these audiovisual styles have come to look and sound the way that they do; we will examine how media representations of national cultures have their own pitfalls and blind spots. In addition to viewing Korean media as a kind of text for analysis, or as a reflection of various elements of Korean society, we will look at media as intellectual property, media as a form of nostalgia, media as products of policy, media's relationship with real-life cities and locations, etc.

Taught in English.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

No prior knowledge required for this course.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will

- ✓ learn how to use a variety of resources for academic research
- ✓ have a deeper knowledge of South Korean society and its presentation in media
- ✓ understand that Korean media works as intersections of various forces, such as consumer culture, corporate expansion, government policy, international influence, and fandom
- ✓ evaluate Korean films and dramas as portrayals of the past but also reflections of their present
- ✓ consider how media representations are images that engage with both Korean and global discourses

Course Requirements & Grading

Assignment	Date	Percentage of Final Grade
Attendance and participation (class and film screenings)		30%
Student questions		10%
Student postings		30%
Film techniques quiz	10/1	10%
Project proposal	11/18	5%

Assignment	Date	Percentage of Final Grade
Final project	12/10	15%

Description of Graded Components

Class participation: Students should come to class having watched the films and read the readings, and are expected to engage actively in class discussions. This is a course that will rely heavily on class discussion and participation is the largest grade component for the course, so students should keep that in mind when they attend class. If you have an unexcused absence, your participation for that day will be recorded as zero. However, while class attendance and participation for each day of class will be tracked, students will also be evaluated based on in-class attentiveness and engagement with the material *over the semester as a whole*.

Please also check “Attendance and Participation” policy on page 4.

Students are permitted one unexcused absence without penalty.

Student Questions: On some Mondays, students should submit questions about the assigned readings, to be submitted under “Assignments” before 7 PM; the questions will be addressed in lecture. These questions can involve the assigned media materials as well, but should primarily be about the readings.

Student Postings: On some Mondays, students should submit a **minimum 400 word** response on the media work and readings assigned that week, to be submitted under “Assignments” before 7 PM. The first weekly posting (due in Week 3) will be used to give students feedback on their writing, and students will be given full marks for submission alone.

You are not required to adhere to strict citation styles for weekly postings, but **you should cite the readings (page number, author) or any other relevant source when quoting them in your posting**, unless the posting prompt specifies otherwise. Postings should have a clear argument or central thesis statement, supported by what you have gleaned from the readings or other relevant materials. Your writing should demonstrate your understanding of the week’s course materials, and clearly state your viewpoint on the arguments made in the readings; the postings should not be simple summarizations or descriptions of any of the course materials. **Postings that do not cite any readings/sources to support their argument, or do so in a perfunctory fashion that does not effectively engage with the readings, will be deducted points.**

Prompts will be given for each weekly posting, but students should also feel free to include discussions of other aspects of the media/reading materials in their postings as they see fit, as long as the main prompt questions are answered. Writing far over 400 words is also fine.

These weekly postings will be referenced in class for discussions. The instructor may call on students to elaborate on an argument they made or clarify their thoughts in their posting.

Film Techniques Quiz: During the semester, we will be learning the visual analysis tools necessary for understanding the effect of various film techniques. We will apply these tools in class to the films we view. For the quiz, a minute-long film clip will be played on loop continuously for 15 minutes, during which students will be asked to identify 10 distinct film techniques utilized in the clip, and assess what kind of effect the techniques create.

Final Project: For the final assignment project, students will be placed in groups of ~4 students and plan a game that illustrates the production process of a Korean media industry. Students can propose a simulation game about a producer trying to launch a new K-pop group, or a young aspiring Korean drama writer who is looking to write the next hit K-drama. Students should conduct as much research as possible into these industries for their game, and consider what kind of real-life barriers, decisions, and problems are often present in these industries. For this project, students will be provided access to a wide variety of board

games, which they may borrow and use as a model or basic blueprint for their game. The basic mainstream boardgames such as Monopoly, Life, and Chutes & Ladders are excluded from the options.

- **Project Proposal (5%):** Each group will submit a project proposal outlining what industry they will be researching, what game(s) they will be using for their basis, how the workload will be delegated, etc. This proposal's main objective is for students to formulate their ideas, sketch out a design plan, and receive feedback from the instructor; therefore, each group will receive the full 5% of the final grade as long as they submit the proposal with all its components.
- **Final Project (15%)**
 - **Presentation of boardgame (10%):** Students will, in person, present their game design to the instructor. This presentation should (1) introduce the game's theme, mechanics, and basic incentive/punishment structures, (2) explain which theoretical framework from the course was utilized for understanding the media industry, and (3) discuss how specific examples from research informed the decision-making process for game design (e.g. A certain geopolitical controversy in East Asia ended up impacting the box office sales for an expensive movie, which we incorporated into our game through a certain mechanic or game card).
 - **Game blueprint (5%):** Submit a plan or blueprint for the game (e.g. There should ideally be a game board, a mockup of game cards or player markers, etc) and a guide that clearly illustrates how it works and what the rules are. This guide can take the form of a rulebook, or a recorded video/presentation that demonstrates the game, or any other format that can be submitted via Canvas. Students are also expected to provide a list of the media sources from which they took inspiration, as well as any academic or journalistic articles that they used to research the industries. Lack of citations will result in a steep deduction.

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Course Materials

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

Announcements, course readings and other materials will be made available on Canvas.

Additional Materials/Resources

These books will be referenced frequently throughout the semester.

eds. Youna Kim, Joseph Nye, *The Korean Wave: Korean Media go Global*, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013. Available online through Georgia Tech library.

eds. Youngmin Choe, Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. Available online through Georgia Tech library.

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Content Warnings

Some of the audiovisual material assigned for the course will feature graphic, violent content. For students who wish to be better prepared for viewing these materials, content warnings will be provided and

students are welcome to contact the instructor for further information. However, the viewing of these materials is a **requirement** and substitution will not be an option.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Course Policy on Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- AI-generated written work is prohibited in this course. AI tools include but are not limited to ChatGPT, Claude, Grammarly, etc. Written assignments should be based on the student's own absorption and understanding of the assigned materials and researched information, and therefore communicate the student's thoughts and responses with appropriate citation of sources. Writing that fails to cite its sources is plagiarism.
- Written assignments will be graded on substantiveness. While some students may want to use spell-check or grammar-check tools, mistakes in spelling or grammar will not result in any deductions. Poor writing - that is, lack of sound reasoning, illogical and un-fluid structure, vacuous and cliched language, and absence of substantive reflection - will be penalized.
- When researching information, students are expected to draw from academic, institutional, or journalistic sources for their writing; unreliable sources such as blogs, social media posts, or e-commerce websites are not considered valid sources for factual information, though they can be cited as *examples* of a phenomenon or trend. The student is also wholly responsible for any false citations, AI-hallucinated facts, or incorrect information in the assignment, and the assignment will be graded accordingly for shoddy research.
- Students are required to disclose the instances of AI usage in the brainstorming or research process, clearly highlighting in the assignment how AI was utilized, along with an explanation of why the use of AI was necessary. The explanation does not count toward the final word count of the assignment.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to come to class fully prepared to participate in class activities. If students engage in activities that indicate their **inattention or non-participation** in the classroom activities (e.g. falling asleep, text-messaging, doing homework, reading irrelevant materials, etc), this will be reflected in their participation score. Students may use their electronic devices in class inasmuch as they use the devices to reference the readings and engage with the course material. Failure to comply with this will result in lowering their participation and performance grades. **Students are allowed to miss a class** without penalty once.

At the same time, the GT rules and regulations (<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>) will be honored, which allow the absences due to the participations in institute activities, attendance in funerals, participation in particular religious observation, jury duties, etc.

Students who miss class due to illness or emergency should notify the instructor when they can and then should file an [IAA form](#) with the Registrar's Office. The instructor will be notified by e-mail if the absence is approved.

Collaboration & Group Work

Students should complete all homework assignments and projects by themselves unless otherwise specified in the syllabus/by the instructor.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Late assignments will be downgraded a letter grade for every day they are late. If you have major conflicts or extenuating circumstances, **please contact the instructor at least 24 hours in advance** to request an extension. Again, students who have an illness or an emergency should notify the instructor when they can and then should file an [IAA form](#) with the Registrar's Office. Lateness due to illness/emergency will not be penalized.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

Electronic devices will be allowed to reference readings and take notes during discussion if students prefer not to print. Laptops must be closed during presentations and video screenings.

Campus Resources for Students

Georgia Tech offers many resources for students in need including counseling services, personalized research assistance, tutoring, and academic support. Please check out http://ctl.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/campus_resources_students.pdf for more details, and feel free to ask me if you need any assistance in finding these resources.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
8/25	Week 1: Introduction Read syllabus, Q&A	No reading
8/27	Week 1: Defining Categories	No written assignments due this week Watch: "POP/STARS" by K/DA "Make You Happy" by NiziU "Wanli" by HYUKOH "MASCARA" by XG "Touch" by Katseye
9/1 9/3	Week 2: Overview of Modern Korean History	Student Questions #1 due Monday night (8/31), before Tuesday's class

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
		<p>Watch: Dir. Jang Joon-hwan, <i>1987: When the Day Comes</i> (2017)</p> <p>Read: Modern Korean History timeline (linked on Canvas)</p> <p>Seung-ho Kwon, Joseph Kim, "From censorship to active support: The Korean state and Korea's cultural industries," <i>The Economic and Labor Relations Review</i> 24(4), 2013: 517-532</p>
<p>9/8 9/10</p>	<p>Week 3: The "K" and "Pop" in K-pop</p>	<p>Student Posting #1 due Monday night (9/7)</p> <p>Watch: "Challan," by BewhY (2019) "Feel Like" by NAUL (2018) "Spot Interview" with NAUL (2018)</p> <p>Read: Crystal S. Anderson, <i>Soul in Seoul: African American Popular Music and K-pop</i>, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2020. pp. 3-41.</p> <p>Pil Ho Kim, Hyunjoon Shin, "The Birth of "Rok": Cultural Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Glocalization of Rock Music in South Korea, 1964-1975," <i>positions</i> 18(1), 2010: 199-230.</p>
<p>9/15 9/17</p>	<p>Week 4: Films, Film Festivals, Circulation</p>	<p>Student Questions #2 due Monday night</p> <p>Watch: Dir. Park Chan-wook, <i>Oldboy</i> (2003)</p> <p>Read: Chi-Yun Shin, "The Art of Branding: Tartan "Asia Extreme" Films," <i>Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema</i>, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009. 85-100.</p> <p>Jinhee Choi, <i>The South Korean Film Renaissance</i>, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010. 164-192.</p>
<p>9/22 9/24</p>	<p>Week 5: Film and Visual Analysis</p>	<p>Student Questions #3 due Monday night</p> <p>Watch: Dir. Bong Joon-ho, <i>Snowpiercer</i> (2013)</p> <p>Read: David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, <i>Film Art: An Introduction</i>, New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019. Chap. 4, 5, and 8</p>
<p>9/29 10/1</p>	<p>Week 6: Film Production, Capital, Location</p>	<p>Film Techniques Quiz on Thursday (10/1), no online postings due</p> <p>Watch: Dir. Kim Sung-hoon, <i>Kingdom</i> Ep. 1-3, Netflix (2019)</p> <p>Read: Darcy Paquet, <i>New Korean Cinema: Breaking the Waves</i>, London: Wallflower Press, 2009: 44-60</p> <p>Youjeong Oh, <i>Pop City: Popular Culture and the Selling of Place</i>, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018. 33-100. (Intro, Chap 1-2)</p>

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
10/6	Fall Break - no class	<p>Student Posting #2 due Wednesday night (10/7) Read: “Soft Power and the Korean Wave,” in <i>The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global</i>, 31-42.</p>
10/8	Week 7: Soft (?) Power (?)	<p>Kim, Hun Shik, “When public diplomacy faces trade barriers and diplomatic frictions: The case of the Korean wave.” <i>Place Branding and Public Diplomacy</i> 14(4), Nov 2018: 234-244.</p> <p>Iwabuchi Koichi, <i>Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism</i>, Duke University Press, 2002: 23-50</p>
10/13	Week 8: Gaming, Esports, Infrastructure	<p>Student Questions #4 due Monday night Watch: <i>Eyes on Worlds</i> Ep. 3-4, LoL Esports Youtube Channel (2017)</p> <p><i>OGN 2018 LCK Summer Split Opening Title (LoL Champions)</i>, OGN Youtube channel (2018)</p> <p><i>Phoenix (ft. Cailin Russo and Chrissy Costanza), Worlds 2019 - League of Legends</i>, League of Legends Youtube channel (2019)</p> <p>Read: Jun-Sok Huh, “Culture and Business of PC Bangs in Korea,” <i>Games and Culture</i> 3(1), Jan 2008: 26-37</p> <p>Keung Yoon Bae, “‘Too Many Koreans’: Esports Biopower and South Korean Gaming Infrastructure,” in eds. Micky Lee, Peichi Chung, <i>Media Technologies for Work and Play in East Asia: Critical Perspectives on Japan and the Two Koreas</i>, Bristol University Press, 2021: 205-228</p>
10/20	Week 9: Transmedia Storytelling (1)	<p>Student Posting #3 due Monday night Read: Webtoon <i>Cheese in the Trap</i>, Prologue (Ep. 0) to Ep. 15 (in Webtoon app, if possible)</p> <p>Keung Yoon Bae, “From underground to the palm of your hand: The spatiality and cultural practice of South Korean webtoons,” <i>East Asian Journal of Popular Culture</i> 3(1), April 2017: 73-84</p> <p>Francesco Casetti, <i>The Lumière galaxy: seven key words for the cinema to come</i>, New York: Columbia University Press. 19-42</p>
10/27	Week 10: Fan Production and Culture	<p>Student Questions #5 due Monday night</p> <p>For student questions this week, students should post a fan-produced video that relates to Korean culture. These can be montages, fan dubs, “random dance” performances, stage mix videos, fake trailers, etc. The students should briefly explain in their post why they chose this video, and what they find interesting or notable about it as an example of fan culture.</p>

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
		<p>They will be expected to introduce their video in class, where we will watch as many of the videos as possible on Tuesday.</p> <p>Read: Henry Jenkins, <i>Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture</i>. New York: Routledge, 2013. 223-249</p> <p>Yeran Kim, "Globalization of the Privatized Self-Image: The Reaction Video and Its Attention Economy on Youtube," in eds. Larissa Hjorth and Olivia Khoo, <i>Routledge Handbook of New Media in Asia</i>, New York: Routledge, 2016. 333-342.</p> <p>David Oh, "Black K-Pop Fan Videos and Polyculturalism," <i>Popular Communication</i> 15(4): 269-282.</p>
11/3 11/5	Week 11: Board Game Week + Theoretical Review	<p>Student Posting #4 due Monday night: Students should use the assigned readings from the previous week to discuss one or two of the fan videos shown by their classmates. Reflect on how the frameworks outlined by the readings apply <u>or</u> don't apply to these videos.</p> <p>For this week, we will spend one lecture day becoming acquainted with contemporary board games, and one day reviewing the various cultural and geopolitical theories we have used in class thus far. This will be preparation for the final assignment for the course. There are no assigned readings or materials for this week.</p>
11/10 11/12	Week 12: Between "Local" and "Global"	<p>Student Posting #5 due Monday night</p> <p>Final Project proposals due Friday night (11/13)</p> <p>Watch: Dir. Yeon Sang-ho, <i>Train to Busan</i> (2016)</p> <p>Read: Kyle Bishop, "Raising the Dead," <i>Journal of Popular Film and Television</i>, 33.4: 196-205</p> <p>Luisa Koo, "National Cinema, Trauma, and Melodrama in the Korean Zombie Film <i>Train to Busan</i> (2016)," in eds. Francesco Pascuzzi and Sarah Waters, <i>The Spaces and Places of Horror</i>, Wilmington, Delaware: Vernon Press, 2020.</p>
11/17 11/19	Week 13: Gender, Sexuality, Commodity	<p>Student Questions #6 due Monday night</p> <p>Watch: "Oh!" by Girls' Generation (2010)</p> <p>"Miniskirt," by AOA (2014)</p> <p>"Egotistic" cover by AOA (orig. song by Mamamoo), <i>Queendom</i> Ep. 3 (2019)</p> <p>"Move" by Taemin (2017)</p>

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
		<p>Read: Excerpt from Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," chapter from <i>Feminism and Film Theory</i>, New York: Routledge. 1988.</p> <p>Stephen Epstein, James Turnbull, "Girls Generation? Gender, (Dis)Empowerment, and K-pop," <i>The Korean Popular Culture Reader</i></p>
11/24	Week 14: Platform and Media, Platform as Media	<p>Student Posting #6 due Monday night</p> <p>Watch: "Cheer Up" by TWICE</p>
11/26	Thanksgiving Break - no class	<p>"What is Love" by TWICE</p> <p>"Rude!" by Hearts2Hearts</p> <p>Read: excerpt from Marshall McLuhan, <i>Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man</i>, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.</p> <p>Instructor will be conducting check-in meetings with student groups about the status of their final projects</p>
12/1	Week 15: Transmedia Storytelling (2)	<p>Student Posting #7 due Monday night</p> <p>Watch: tvN drama <i>Cheese in the Trap</i>, Ep. 1 (Students should also review webtoon along with watching the drama)</p> <p>Youtube video "BTS WINGS ERA EXPLAINED"</p> <p>Read: Henry Jenkins, <i>Convergence Culture: Where old and new media collide</i>, New York: New York University Press. 93-130.</p> <p>Otsuka Eiji, "World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative," <i>Mechademia</i>, Vol. 5 (2010): 99-116.</p>
12/3		
12/8	Week 16: Moving Across Platforms	<p>Student Questions #7 due Monday night</p> <p>Watching in class: My Little Television, Ep. 43</p>
12/12 - 12/14	Presentations of final project	
12/15	Final Project due	
12/22	Grades available	