

ML 2500 Syllabus

Intro to Cross Cultural Studies: History and Film in South Korea (Summer 2026)

Remote, Asynchronous

Instructor Information

Instructor
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Office Hours
Virtual/phone, by appointment

General Information

Description

This course will examine South Korean history through cinema, and Korean cinema through history, by viewing films from various time periods that depict moments in Korean history. The films will range from colonial-era works from the 1940s to contemporary Korean films of the 2010s, and each module will be accompanied by historical background readings. Throughout this course, we will watch films about a certain time period from that time period, and also watch films about that same period that were produced long after; we will examine films that offer sharply differing portrayals and perspectives on the same time period. The objective is not to learn historical facts through films, but rather to understand how films depict history, how the socio-political climate of the film's own time period shapes its depiction of history, and how we can view film texts themselves as a different kind of historical argument.

This course does not assume prior knowledge of Korean culture or of film studies, but rather seeks to provide students with a basic understanding of modern Korean history, as well as understanding how media itself is part of Korea's tumultuous past.

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Humanities area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance, and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence

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 film design, style, and production techniques
- ✓ be able to evaluate films as the individual work of major directors, the collaborative effort of the film's production, and the product of long-running influences from various sources
- ✓ understand the unique trajectory of East Asian film industries, and how they have impacted one another throughout past century

Course Requirements & Grading

Assignment	Date	Weight (Percentage, points, etc)
Discussion postings (15)		45% (3 points each)
Comparative assignments (3)		45% (15 points each)
Final oral examination		10%

Description of Graded Components

Discussion postings: One posting due every day of the course. Prompts will be provided. **Postings are due by midnight (EST).**

Each posting will be worth 3 points. Weekly postings do not need formal citations, but please include at least the author name and page number/timestamp if you are citing/quoting from a publication or media work. Failure to cite even just with (author name, page number) will result in deducted points. **Students are welcome to request feedback on their postings.**

Comparative Assignments: At the end of each week, students will be asked to complete assignments reviewing and reflecting on the materials of that week. The first assignment will be creating a timeline of the Korean War based on the readings and films. The other two assignments will be 500-600 word essays comparing the module's media works, and how they depict history. Prompts will be provided.

These assignments are not required to follow formal citation style guides, but students are expected to use academic sources for their writing and cite them by at least the author name and page number. Failure to cite even just with (author name, page number) will result in deducted points. **Students are welcome to request feedback on their writing.**

Oral Examination: Students will schedule a 1-on-1 meeting with the instructor for 15 minutes, during which the instructor will conduct an interview reviewing the course's main topics and themes as shown through the assigned media works. Students should expect to discuss in detail the various media works and how they are in conversation with each other.

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 Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
Week 1	Colonial Korea (1910 - 1945) and the Korean War	
5/18	Introduction to the course	Read: Syllabus and the Modern Korean History timeline (on Canvas)

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
		You can post any questions about the course syllabus, course content, or any other relevant information in in the discussion posting.
5/19	Colonial History and Filmmaking	Watch: <i>Assassination</i> (2015), Dir. Choi Dong-hoon (Note: All director names will be written in Korean style, with family name first) Read: Michael E. Robinson, <i>Korea's Twentieth Century Odyssey: A Short History</i> , Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. 76-99
5/20		Watch: <i>Spring on the Peninsula</i> (1941), Dir. Yi Byeong-il Read: Sample weekly essay
5/21	The Korean War	Watch: <i>Taegukgi</i> (2004), Dir. Kang Je-gyu Read: Michael Robinson, <i>Korea's Twentieth Century Odyssey: A Short History</i> , Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. 100-120.
5/22		Watch: <i>The Frontline</i> (2011), Dir. Jang Hoon Read: Sheila Miyoshi Jager, <i>Brothers at War: The Unending Conflict in Korea</i> , p. 193-207
5/24	Comparative Assignment #1	Submit by 8 PM Sunday night
Week 2	Postwar Korea and Economic Development	
5/25	Devastation and Recovery	Watch: <i>Aimless Bullet</i> (1961), dir. Yu Hyun-mok
5/26		Watch: <i>Ode to My Father</i> (2014)
5/27	Park Chung-hee, Industrialization, and Authoritarian Society	Watch: <i>The Man Standing Next</i> (2020), Dir. Woo Min-ho Read: Chihyung Jeon, "A Road to Modernization and Unification: The Construction of the Gyeongbu Highway in South Korea," <i>Technology and Culture</i> , Issue 51. p. 55-79.
5/28		Watch: <i>March of Fools</i> (1975), Dir. Ha Kil-jong Read: Kim Mee Hyun, "The Authoritarian Period and a Depression in the Film Industry, 1972-1979," in <i>Korean Cinema: From Origins to Renaissance</i> . p. 221-229.
5/29	Seoul Spring	Watch: <i>12:12 - The Day</i> (2023), dir. Kim Sung-su
5/31	Comparative Assignment #2	Submit by 8 PM Sunday night
Week 3	Democratization	
6/1	Depicting Gwangju	Watch: <i>Taxi Driver</i> (2017), Dir. Jang Hoon Read: Michael Robinson, <i>Korea's Twentieth Century Odyssey: A Short History</i> , Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. 121-145.
6/2		Watch: <i>Peppermint Candy</i> (1999), Dir. Yi Chang-dong

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
6/3	Legacy of Protest	Watch: 1987: <i>When the Day Comes</i> (2017), Dir. Jang Joon-hwan
6/4		Watch: KBS 60 Minutes Documentary, "The Night of Martial Law"
6/5	Film and Memory	Read: Robert A. Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film," <i>The American Historical Review</i> , Vol. 93 (5), p. 1173-1185
6/7	Comparative Assignment #3	Submit by 8 PM Sunday night
6/12	Oral Examinations	Schedule online

Course Materials

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

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

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Content Warnings

Some of the audiovisual material assigned for the course may 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/or 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.

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.