



서울대학교 현대한국종합연구단  
SNU Contemporary Korean Studies

# Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies





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## Table of Contents

<b>Message from the Director</b>	4-5
----------------------------------	-----

<b>Why Contemporary Korean Studies?</b>	6-15
---	------

<b>Key Timeline and Future Plans</b>	16
--------------------------------------	----

<b>Research Center Composition</b>	17-18
------------------------------------	-------

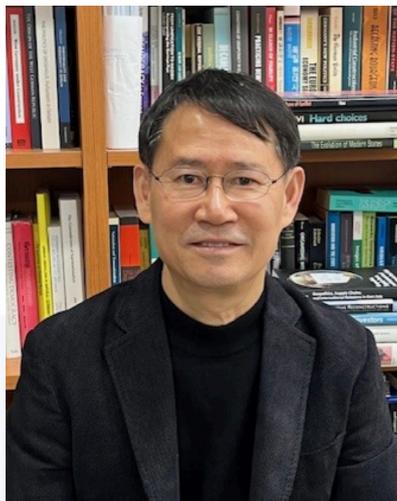
<b>Research Team Introductions</b>	19-29
------------------------------------	-------

- Political Economy
- K-Future
- Values & Identity
- Global Hallyu Studies
- K-Narratives
- Modernity & Developmental History
- Contemporary Korean Music
- K-Tech
- Statehood & Civil Society
- Democracy & Democratization

<b>Overview of Research Achievements</b>	30-59
--	-------

- Publications
- Research Achievements by Research Teams
- International Conferences

*Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies* is the leading research center for the study of contemporary Korea. *Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies* conducts interdisciplinary research across politics, economics, technology, and culture, and collaborates with scholars both in Korea and abroad to expand knowledge sharing and academic exchange.



Professor Kwon Hyeong-Ki

Department of Political Science and International Relations,  
Seoul National University

Recipient of the Karl Deutsch Award  
of the International Political Science Association  
— the only recipient in Asia

*Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies* was established with the goal of becoming a global hub for comprehensive research and education on contemporary Korea. As global interest in Korea has increased in recent years, demand for academic research and education on contemporary Korea has also grown rapidly. However, institutional infrastructure has not yet developed in a systematic way to meet this demand.

To address this challenge, the Center organized ten specialized research teams encompassing a wide range of fields, including Korean politics, economy, society, culture, and technology. Each team conducts research within its respective discipline while also pursuing interdisciplinary approaches to provide more comprehensive and integrated insights.

Through these research activities, the Center seeks to strengthen networks among Korean Studies scholars in Korea and abroad and to provide platforms for international academic exchange. At the same time, by establishing a synergy between research and education, the Center aims to cultivate the next generation of scholars in Korean Studies.

To build on the academic activities of the research teams, the Center hosts an international conference annually and publishes the outcomes with Palgrave Macmillan in the Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies. The Center also maintains a website that archives these activities and makes them accessible to audiences in Korea and abroad.

We hope that this journey with *Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies* will become a meaningful partnership in expanding the horizons of Korean Studies.

Sincerely,  
Kwon Hyeong-Ki

권형기

# Why Contemporary Korean Studies?

## New Demand for Korean Studies

Growing Global Interest in Contemporary Korea



## Current Landscape of Korean Studies Research

Existing research remains heavily concentrated on premodern and early modern Korea

Increasing Demand for Interdisciplinary Research  
Spanning Across Topics  
Such as Culture, Economy, and Politics



An overemphasis on historical research and limited interdisciplinary research

Rising Number of Students Majoring in Korean Studies and Expanding Educational Demand



Expansion of educational infrastructure, including faculty and teaching materials, for Korean Studies

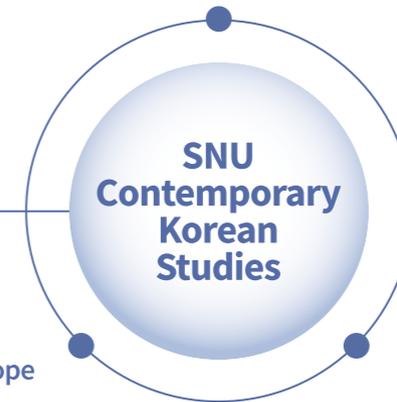
## Strategic Direction of Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies

Toward a Global Hub for Comprehensive Research on Contemporary Korea



Focus on contemporary Korea

Time Period



Disciplinary Scope

Multidimensional and interdisciplinary research

Education

Integration of research and education

**Time Period**  
Focus on contemporary Korea

Shifting the focus from historical studies to contemporary Korea.

**Disciplinary Scope**  
Multidimensional and interdisciplinary research

Through research across diverse fields and interdisciplinary collaboration, we examine the complex and evolving dimensions of contemporary Korea.

**Education**  
Integration of research and education

By linking research and education, we seek to build a sustainable academic ecosystem.

# 01. Changes in Global Demand

## Growing Demand for Korean Studies

With the global rise of K-pop, K-dramas, and other aspects of Hallyu, along with attention to Korea's economic development and democratization experience, demand for research on Korean politics, economy, society, culture, and history has increased significantly.

According to the publication from the Korea Foundation, the number of universities offering Korean Studies courses abroad has expanded dramatically over the past two decades. In 2007, approximately 632 institutions in 55 countries offered Korean language and Korean Studies courses (Korea Foundation, 2025). However, as of 2025, that figure has grown to around 1,421 institutions in 106 countries, and among these, 115 universities offer full Korean Studies degree programs (undergraduate, master's, and doctoral). This trend reflects the rapid global expansion of academic interest in Korea. This trend reflects the rapid global expansion of academic interest in Korea.

### Number of Universities Teaching Korean Language and Korean Studies



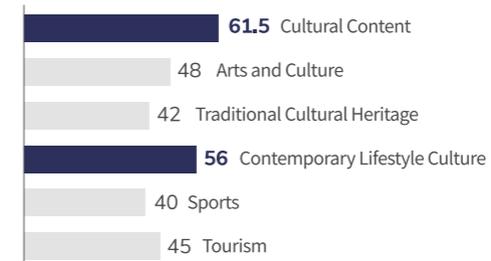
## Interest in Contemporary Korea

According to the National Image Report published by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in 2024, Korea enjoys a high level of international recognition in the areas of cultural content, contemporary lifestyle and culture, and economic development. In particular, global interest in Korea is concentrated primarily on contemporary Korean culture, society, and economic dimensions.

Percentage of Respondents Who Say They Are Familiar with Each Area of Korea



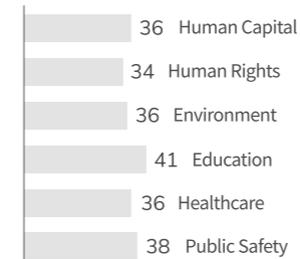
### Cultural Dimension



### Economic Dimension



### Social Dimension



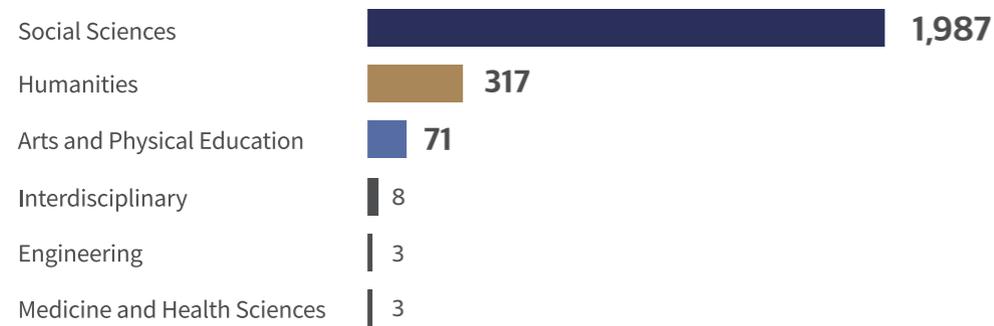
### Economic Dimension



## Broad and Varied Interest

In addition, statistics from the Korea Foundation’s Global E-School course offerings show that within Korean Studies, a particularly large share of courses are in the social sciences. Within the social sciences, there are 513 courses in political science and international relations, 489 courses in sociology, and 330 courses in economics. Within the field of arts and physical education, film studies alone accounts for 40 courses. These figures demonstrate that interest in Korean Studies spans a wide range of academic fields, rather than being concentrated in a single discipline.

### Number of Korean Studies Courses by Field

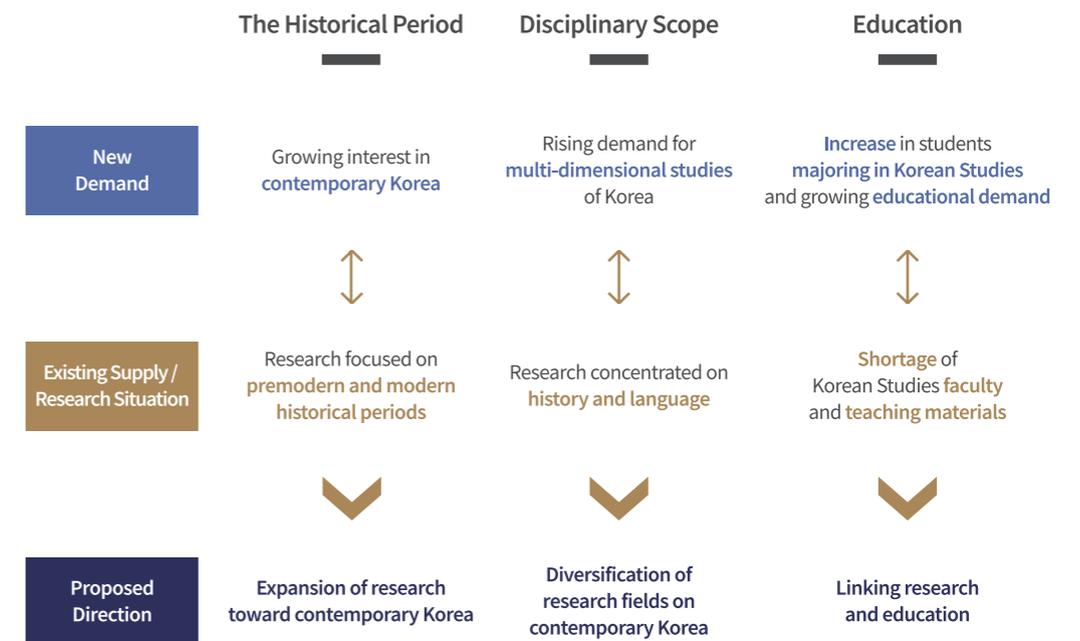


### Major Subfields by Number of Courses

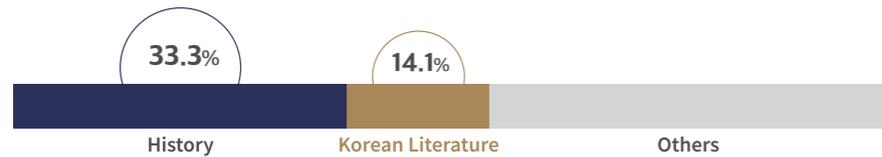


## 02. The Current State of Korean Studies: Three Mismatches in Korean Studies Research

Despite the rapid growth of global interest in contemporary Korea across multiple disciplines, existing Korean Studies research remains heavily concentrated on history or language, and the time scope is largely confined to the premodern and early modern periods. As a result, there is a **mismatch between the global demands on Korean Studies and the current supply of research and educational resources.**



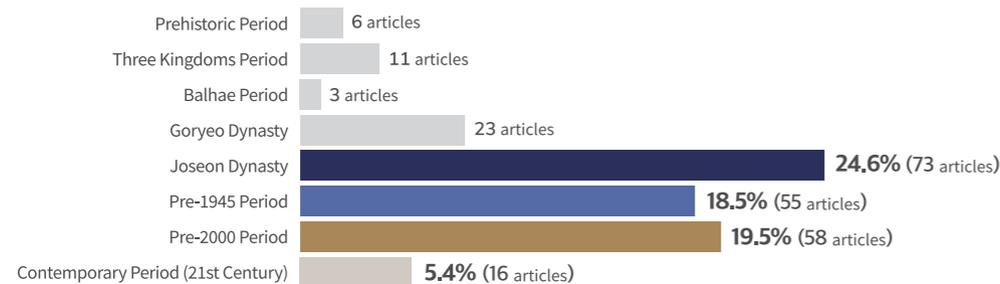
Among academic journals related to Korean Studies and research on Korea, the journal that has received the highest level of international recognition is the Seoul Journal of Korean Studies (hereafter *SJKS*), published by the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at Seoul National University. According to the KCI classification, the primary related research fields of *SJKS* are history (33.3%) and Korean literature (14.1%), indicating a strong concentration on Korean history and language.



Moreover, keyword analysis of *SJKS* in the KCI database reveals a strong concentration on historical topics, including Buddhism, Goryeo, Joseon, and Confucianism.



In terms of the historical period, most articles published in *SJKS* focus on the premodern and early modern periods. Of the 297 articles analyzed, the most frequently addressed periods were the Joseon dynasty (73 articles, 24.58%), the period from liberation to before the 2000s (“pre-2000s”) (58 articles, 19.53%), and the late nineteenth century to the Japanese colonial period (“pre-1945”) (55 articles, 18.52%). By contrast, the periods of Balhae and the Later Three Kingdoms (3 articles), the prehistoric period (6 articles), and the Three Kingdoms period (11 articles) were discussed relatively infrequently. The 21<sup>st</sup> century was also underrepresented, with only 16 articles (5.39%).

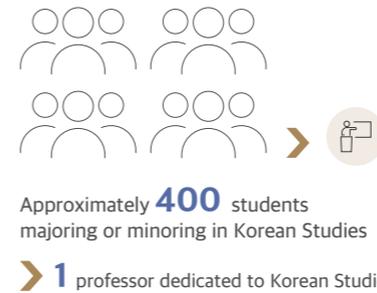


There is also a **mismatch at the educational level**. The number of students studying Korean Studies is increasing rapidly worldwide, and Korean Studies education is expanding accordingly. According to the Korea Foundation (KF), by 2014 it had allocated a total of 119 Korean Studies faculty positions to 81 universities in 13 countries, and by 2025 this had expanded to 170 positions at 109 universities in 20 countries.



However, institutional responses vary considerably. While some universities have expanded faculty capacity to accommodate growing demand, others continue to face faculty shortages. For example, in 2025 at Goethe University Frankfurt in Germany, approximately 400 students were majoring or minoring in Korean Studies, while only one full-time professor was employed in the field. By contrast, at Université Paris Cité in France, approximately 350 students were enrolled in Korean Studies across the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral levels, where teaching was provided by one full professor and eight associate professors, supported by additional instructors in Korean language, history, anthropology, and political science. In other words, this university has made considerable efforts in response to student demand by offering a wide range of courses on contemporary Korean history and various other aspects of Korean society.

**Goethe University Frankfurt**



**Université Paris Cité**



Nevertheless, despite the rapid growth in demand for education in contemporary Korean Studies, existing programs remain fragmented across departments and colleges, making it difficult to respond effectively. This situation points to the need for an integrated and systematic educational program capable of training specialists in contemporary Korean Studies.

# 03. Vision of Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies

The reason **Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies** undertakes the study of contemporary Korea is that, despite a mismatch among the three pillars of demand-research-education across Korean Studies, the field has failed to respond effectively to this challenge. Comprehensive research on contemporary Korea is essential to address this mismatch. Accordingly, the Center aims to serve as a global hub for the comprehensive study of contemporary Korea, responding systematically and holistically to intellectual and academic demand across a wide range of fields, including language, literature, history, and philosophy, as well as politics, economics, society, and culture. Furthermore, through the integration of research and education, the Center seeks to ensure the sustainability and continued reproduction of scholarship in contemporary Korean Studies.



## Focused research on contemporary Korea

The Center focuses not only on Korea's history but also on contemporary Korea.

## Diversification of research fields and interdisciplinary approaches

It examines a wide range of domains in contemporary Korean society and, through interdisciplinary research, seeks to capture and analyze its diverse dimensions.

## A synergy through the integration of research and education

By linking research and education, the Center aims to ensure the sustainability and reproduction of scholarly knowledge.

## Vision of Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies

### Regular Research Presentations

Strengthening interdisciplinary and comprehensive research capacity through regular research presentations by each team throughout the year

### Online Meetings with International Scholars

Building a global research network through regular Zoom meetings with overseas scholars organized by each research team

### Annual International Conference (Every August)

Cultivating the next generation of scholars leading contemporary Korean Studies and establishing the foundation for a global hub in the field

### Publication of Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies

Publishing monographs with the internationally renowned publisher Palgrave Macmillan to lead global academic discussions on contemporary Korea

### Official Website & Brochures

Building and sharing a database of research outputs and resources to promote the dissemination of contemporary Korean Studies

### International English-Language Journal Launch (upcoming)

Planning the launch of an English-language journal to enhance the international visibility and academic impact of Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies

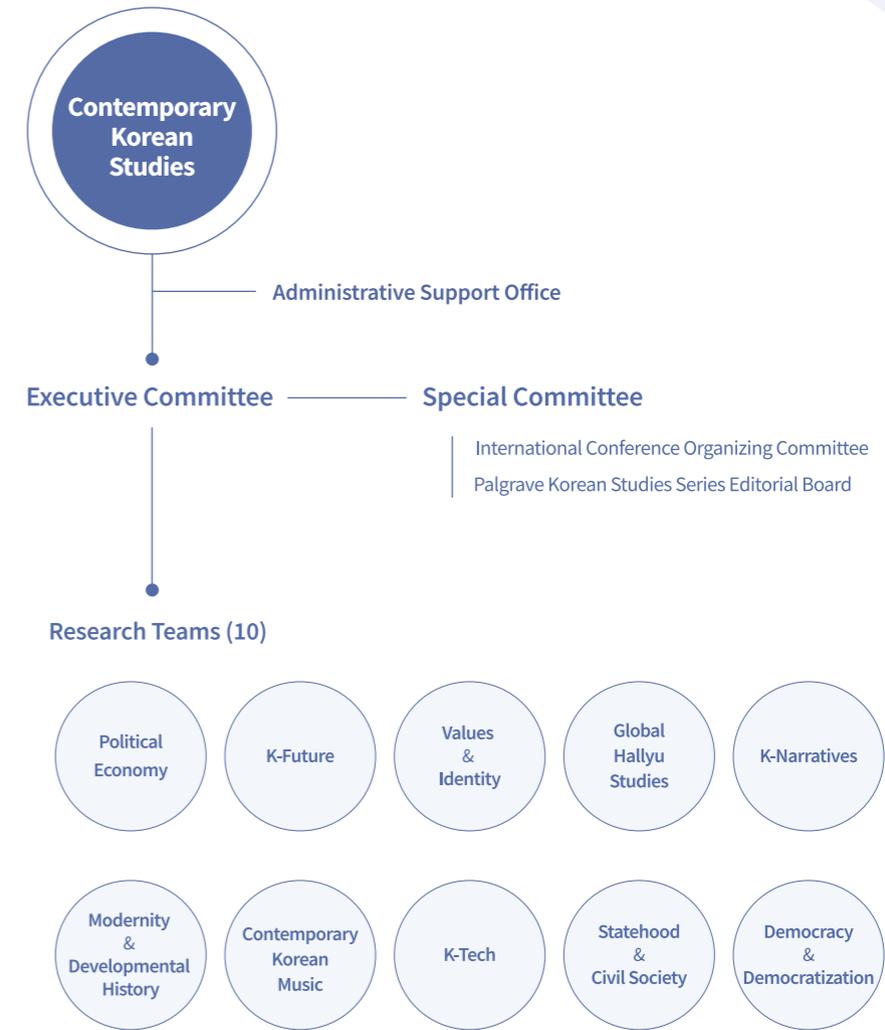
### Educational Programs Integrating Research and Education (upcoming)

Establishing a Global Foreign Advisory Board to strengthen partnerships with overseas universities, and developing an interdisciplinary joint-degree program in Korean Studies focused on contemporary Korea

## Key Timeline and Future Plans

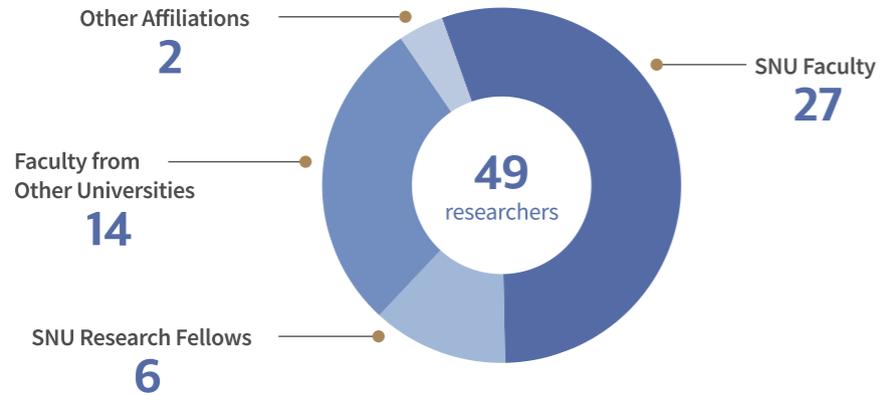


## Research Center Composition



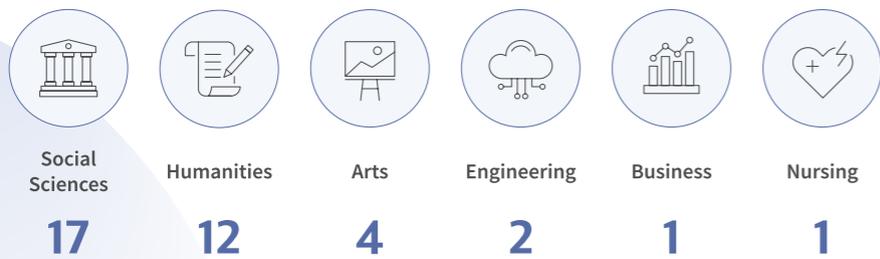
Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies is composed of ten thematically organized research teams, each of which conducts comprehensive research on topics such as Korea’s political economy, Hallyu, narratives, values and identity, music, developmental history, civil society, and democratization and democracy. In addition, the Center has established two special committees responsible for organizing the annual international conference and for overseeing the publication of the Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies.

Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies consists of a total of 49 researchers. Among them, 27 are faculty members affiliated with Seoul National University, 14 are affiliated with other universities, 6 are affiliated with research institutes within Seoul National University, and 2 have other institutional affiliations.



In addition, the Center seeks to diversify research on contemporary Korea by recruiting scholars from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds. Among the faculty members, 17 are in the social sciences, 12 in the humanities, 4 in the arts, 2 in engineering, and 1 each in business and nursing. A further 4 members are affiliated with professional graduate schools or other institutions, reflecting a deliberate effort to ensure disciplinary diversity.

**Faculty Composition by Field**



## Research Team Introductions

- Political Economy
- K-Future
- Values & Identity
- Global Hallyu Studies
- K-Narratives
- Modernity & Developmental History
- Contemporary Korean Music
- K-Tech
- Statehood & Civil Society
- Democracy & Democratization

## Political Economy

We explore the structures and transformations of Korean political economy from historical and comparative perspectives.

The Political Economy Research Team conducts in-depth research on the political and economic structures of contemporary Korean society and their transformations from historical and comparative perspectives. Our team analyzes the institutional transitions, the restructuring of industrial and financial systems, and Korea's responses and adaptations within the global economic order. On this basis, the research examines the pathways toward sustainable development and democratic governance in Korean society.

Our team's primary research focuses on government policies, industrial and financial systems, and international economic relations. It also examines the political, institutional, and socioeconomic changes that emerge in the process of economic development. Particular attention is paid to how these changes intersect with key societal issues such as values, identity, inequality, and democracy.

Additionally, our team seeks to disseminate research findings through collaboration and scholarly exchange with academic communities both domestically and internationally. Through these collaborations and exchanges, our team aims to make substantive contributions that extend beyond academic discourse to include policy recommendations. Our team provides researchers and students with data and analyses that enable a deeper understanding of the structures and dynamics of contemporary Korean political economy. It also seeks to enhance the reach and impact of its research through collaboration with international academic networks.



Kwon Hyun-Ji  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Kwon Hyun-Ji	Seoul National University	Labor Sociology
Kwon Hyeong-Ki	Seoul National University	Political Theory and Comparative Politics
Lee Keun	Chung-Ang University	Labor Sociology
Kim Kyung-Mi	Sapienza University of Rome	Korean Political Economy and Political Economy Philosophy
Song Jae-Yong	Seoul National University	Strategic Management and International Business

## K-Future

Traversing theory and phenomena, thought and practice, we experiment with the future of Korean Studies.

The K-Future Research Team focuses on two main research agendas: (1) the exploration of new theoretical resources for twenty-first-century Korean studies, and (2) the analysis of diverse social, cultural, and political symptoms that anticipate the future of Korean society. To support its theoretical work, the K-Future team runs a "Theory Atelier" in collaboration with scholars working across different theoretical traditions.

Through this platform, our team seeks to explore points of connection between Korean Studies and theoretical reflection. With regard to future-oriented research, our team identifies key cases that will shape the future of Korean society and applies field-based or text-centered case studies alongside a symptom-oriented hermeneutic approach.

Theoretically, this research aims to creatively integrate theoretical experiments accumulated in the Humanities and Social Sciences over the past four decades with Korean Studies. Simultaneously, it seeks to expand Korean Studies beyond its traditional focus on Korea's past and identity toward the present and future.



Hong Jung KIM  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Hong Jung KIM	Seoul National University	Social Theory; Sociology of the Future
Jaeho Kang	Seoul National University	Critical Theory; Media Theory
Jungha Kim	Seoul National University	Contemporary American Literature
Dongshin Yi	Seoul National University	Contemporary American Fiction
Seung Cheol LEE	Seoul National University	Economic Anthropology; Critical Theory
Munyoung Cho	Yonsei University	Cultural Anthropology; Poverty Studies

# Values & Identity

Exploring the new values and identities emerging in 21st-century Korean society



The Values & Identity Research Team focuses on the new patterns of values and identities emerging in twenty-first-century Korean society. Korea entered the twenty-first century after experiencing rapid economic growth and compressed modernization over the five decades following liberation. Throughout this historical process, values and identities were formed in complex and layered ways. In the twenty-first century, however, a diverse set of new values and identities has become increasingly visible. Multiple values and identities structured around religion, generation, region, gender, and social class have long coexisted in Korean society. Yet as Korea has rapidly become a multicultural society in the twenty-first century, social diversification has accelerated, and conflicts among different values and identities have become more pronounced.

Our team seeks to analyze phenomena related to values and identities in contemporary Korea through a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, including religious studies, geography, women's and gender studies, sociology, migration studies, and cultural studies. Our team aims in particular to contribute to the development of general theoretical frameworks for understanding multilayered identities and their dynamic relationships under the conditions of multiculturalism and religious pluralism in the twenty-first century.



Hae-young Seong  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Yohan Yoo	Seoul National University	Theories and methods in comparative religion
Hyunjoo Jung	Seoul National University	Migration and Multiculturalism; Urban Studies and Gender
Hae-young Seong	Seoul National University	Psychology of Religion; Mysticism
Soo-Ah Kim	Seoul National University	Women's Studies; Popular Culture Studies
Song Chong Lee	Seoul National University	Religion and Society
Minah Kim	Incheon National University	Contemporary Religion; Sociology of Religion

# Global Hallyu Studies

Exploring Korea in the world through Hallyu as a transnational cultural phenomenon



Hallyu emerged in the late 1990s as a phenomenon of cultural identification and fan-based subcultures in Asia, and has since expanded into a global cultural phenomenon. This expansion reflects both Korea's changing global standing and the universal relevance of the social issues represented and generated by Hallyu content. Reassessing the significance of Hallyu and recognizing the need for new approaches to Hallyu Studies, the Global Hallyu Studies Team pursues the following research directions:

First of all, our team seeks to contribute theoretically by examining how Hallyu, as a transnational cultural phenomenon, reshapes and reconfigures existing theories of global culture. As a form of globally mediated cultural reception, Hallyu is context-sensitive and has generated a substantial body of case-based research. Moving beyond the accumulation of case studies, our team aims to theorize Hallyu in ways that contribute to general knowledge about global cultural production and reception. Through this process, our team seeks to analyze academically how intersubjective knowledge about Korea's position and meaning in the world is produced through Hallyu. To support this agenda, our team aims to build global scholarly networks, promote collaborative research, and cultivate the next generation of scholars in the field.



Seok-Kyeong Hong  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Seok-Kyeong Hong	Seoul National University	Cultural Studies and Visual Communication
Eun Mee Kim	Seoul National University	Media Theory and Cultural Industries
Sojeong Park	Hanyang University	Popular Culture and Cultural Studies
Jiyoung Suh	Seoul National University Asia Center	Popular Arts and Popular Culture History
Younghan Cho	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies	Cultural Studies and East Asian Popular Culture

## K-Narratives

Exploring narratives  
in contemporary Korean literature and cultural content



To understand contemporary Korea, the K-Narrative Research Team examines current literary and cultural texts and explores two key questions. First, can we identify meaningful commonalities across the worldviews of the diverse narrative genres produced in Korea today (i.e. does a “master plot” exist?) Second, if such a common structure can be identified, can we discern within it a form of national specificity that justifies the qualifier “Korean” (i.e. does a distinct “K-narrative” exist)?

To address these questions, our team collaborates with scholars and critics from Korea and abroad to analyze internationally recognized Korean films, literature, television dramas, and webtoons. The results of this research will be published in a forthcoming volume tentatively titled Narrating Contemporary Korea. Through this work, our team hopes to contribute not only to a deeper understanding of Korean literature and culture, but also to a broader and more nuanced understanding of contemporary Korean society.



Hyoung Cheol Shin  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Hyoung Cheol Shin	Seoul National University	Comparative Literature
Youkyung Son	Seoul National University	Modern Korean Literature
Hyeongjuk Song	KBS	Film Criticism
Kyung Hee Youn	Seoul National University	Comparative Literature

## Modernity & Developmental History

Exploring Korean modernity  
beyond colonial modernity and the developmental state



In existing studies of contemporary Korea, the discourse on colonial modernity emerged as one of the most prominent efforts to theorize the uniqueness of the Korean experience. Colonial modernity discourse represents an attempt to reconstruct the experience of national history in the universal language of human history or global history. However, due to discontinuities in scholarship during the colonial and post-liberation periods, ambiguities surrounding the relationship between modernity and developmentalism and the developmental state, theoretical discussions of Korean modernity have diversified into multiple approaches, including compressed modernity, Manchurian modernity, militarized modernity, and Confucian modernity.

Our team seeks to undertake a historicist reflection on the formation of contemporary Korea by examining theoretical discussions from fields such as history and economic history, focusing on topics including aid, development, and developmental narratives. To achieve this, our team focuses on understanding the structure and character of Korean modernity as a long-term objective, while initially pursuing interdisciplinary research on Korea’s aid, development, and developmental history.



Lee Dongwon  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Lee Dongwon	Seoul National University	East Asian Cold War History and Economic History
Han Bongseok	Pukyong National University	Modern Korean History
Lee Jongwook	Seoul National University	Development Economics and International Development Cooperation
Jiyoung Suh	Sunchon National University	Modern Korean History
Lee Changkeun	KDI School of Public Policy and Management	Economic History and Labor Economics

# Contemporary Korean Music

Exploring the sensibilities of Korean society and culture through music and generate discourse oriented toward the future



The Contemporary Korean Music Research Team examines the meanings of music within society and culture, with a particular focus on the continuities and transformations linking tradition and modernity in Korean music. We analyze how traditions are reinterpreted within contemporary musical worlds — including classical art music, K-pop, and contemporary composition — from aesthetic and historical perspectives. In doing so, our team raises questions about the relationships between music, society, identity, and sensibility, and seeks to develop musical discourses that move across periods and genres.

Through seminars, research presentations, interviews, and the viewing and analysis of performances, our team promotes interdisciplinary dialogue and reflects on both the present of Korean music and its historical foundations in collaboration with scholars from Korea and abroad. We seek to discover new musical meanings at the intersections of tradition and modernity, and of locality and globality.



Anna Yates-Lu  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Anna Yates-Lu	Seoul National University	Ethnomusicology
Oh Hee-sook	Seoul National University	Music Aesthetics and Contemporary Music
Kim Hee-Sun	Seoul Women's University	Music Aesthetics and East Asian Contemporary Music
Hyejin Lee	Kookmin University	Ethnomusicology
Jiyoung Yi	Seoul National University	Gayageum Performance

# K-Tech

Exploring Korean pathways of technological development in the age of AI and robots



The K-Tech Research Team analyzes the multilayered impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics on Korea's rapidly aging society and investigates the distinctive trajectory of Korea's technological development as a late-industrializing economy. Our team's primary research focuses include senior-oriented healthcare systems and cases of state-led industrial innovation, employing an interdisciplinary approach that integrates soft robotics, technology policy analysis, and industrial and economic history.

Through this work, our team seeks to develop a theoretical framework for a Korean model of technological development, to build a multidisciplinary research and education infrastructure centered at Seoul National University as a coordinating hub, and to contribute to the establishment of international standards for contemporary Korean Studies by expanding global research networks.



Park Yong-Lae  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Park Yong-Lae	Seoul National University	Robotics Engineering
Koo Yoon-Mo	Pukyong National University	Energy and Environmental Policy
Kang Ja-Hyun	Seoul National University	Gerontology
Kim Bon	Dongguk University	Adult Nursing

# Statehood & Civil Society

Exploring the transformations of Korean statehood within the modern and contemporary international order



The Statehood and Civil Society Research Team aims to offer a comprehensive review of domestic and international theoretical debates on Korean statehood and to clarify the distinctive historical and politico-social character of the Korean state. Due to the unique geopolitical conditions of the Korean Peninsula, international politics has not simply influenced Korea’s modern history; it has been one of the decisive forces that shaped its trajectory.

From this perspective, our team analyzes the formation and transformation of Korean statehood within the changing East Asian international order—from the traditional Sinocentric order, through modern imperialism, to the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. Using concepts such as the tributary state, colonial state, resistant nationalism, divided state, anti-communist state, and patriarchal state, our team seeks to develop new theoretical reconstructions of Korean statehood and its historical origins.



Jong-Hak Kim  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Jong-Hak Kim	Seoul National University	Modern Korean Diplomatic History
Joon Young Jung	Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University	Historical Sociology and Social History of Knowledge
Hong Jong-Uk	Institute of Humanities, Seoul National University	History of Social Thought and North Korean History
Jeanhyoung Soh	Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University	Historical Sociology and Social History of Knowledge
Choongyeol Kim	Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University	East Asian Political Thought and Modern Political Thought History
Jeeye Song	Institute for International Studies, Seoul National University	History of International Relations and International Relations Theory

# Democracy & Democratization

Comprehensively analyzing the characteristics and development of Korean democracy through theoretical, historical, and comparative perspectives



Since the founding of modern Korea, Korean democracy has evolved along a distinctive and uneven trajectory. During the latter half of the twentieth century, the compressed processes of state-building, economic development, and system competition were accompanied by periods of authoritarian rule. Yet the institutional and actor-level forces driving democratization were never fully extinguished. Following democratization in 1987, democracy appeared to become institutionally consolidated, but in recent years concerns about democratic backsliding have intensified. The ongoing constitutional crisis and political instability following the declaration of emergency martial law have underscored the need for a comprehensive understanding of both the historical evolution and the current challenges facing Korean democracy.

Against this backdrop, the Democracy & Democratization Research Team seeks to analyze the distinctive features, developmental trajectory, institutional character, and political habits of Korean democracy in a comprehensive manner. Whereas existing scholarship has tended to focus heavily on political institutions and voter behavior, our team actively incorporates theoretical, historical, and comparative perspectives that have been relatively underexplored.

To this end, our team adopts an interdisciplinary approach that cuts across political science, sociology, history, and anthropology, and aims to develop analytical frameworks that enable a more multidimensional and in-depth understanding of Korean democracy.



KIM Joohyung  
Seoul National University

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
KIM Joohyung	Seoul National University	Political Thought and Democratic Theory
Hannes Mosler	University of Duisburg-Essen	East Asian Politics and Korean Politics
Hong Taiyoung	Korea National Defense University	Political Thought and European Politics

## Overview of Research Achievements

### • Publications

- Palgrave Macmillan Series in Contemporary Korean Studies
- Publication in an Academic Journal

### • Research Achievements by Research Team

- Political Economy
- K-Future
- Values & Identity
- Global Hallyu Studies
- K-Narratives
- Modernity & Developmental History
- Contemporary Korean Music
- Statehood & Civil Society

### • Organization of International Academic Conferences

- The 1st International Conference (2024)
- The 2nd International Conference (2025)

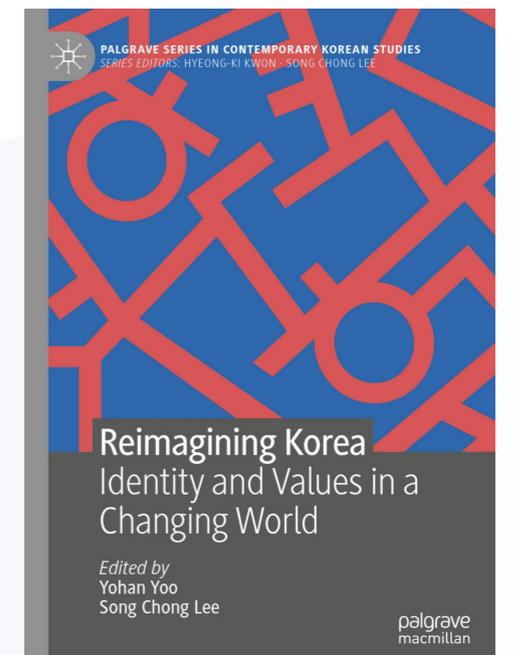
## Publications

### Palgrave Macmillan Series in Contemporary Korean Studies

A publication agreement has been concluded with the internationally renowned publisher Palgrave Macmillan for the Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies, under which a total of eight monographs on contemporary Korea will be published between 2025 and September 30, 2026.

This initiative aims to publish the research outcomes of each research team in order to present and promote the achievements of the Comprehensive Research on Contemporary Korea, particularly in identifying and advancing key research agendas, while also seeking to lead scholarly discussions on contemporary Korea.

In the long term, this series is expected to serve as a foundation for enhancing both the academic and societal level of discourse and the degree of interest in contemporary Korea.

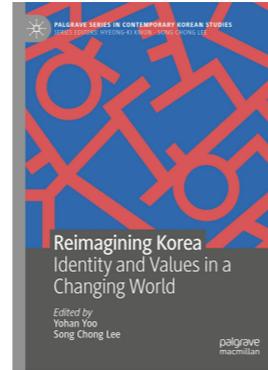


The First Series  
**Reimagining Korea**  
(Edited by) Yohan Yoo, Song Chong Lee

## Reimagining Korea

(Edited by) Yohan Yoo, Song Chong Lee

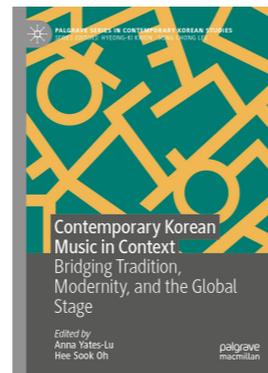
This volume project explores how evolving values and identities in contemporary Korean society are interpreted, particularly through the lens of religion, positioning it as a window into Korea’s dynamic cultural and social landscape. As Korea grapples with rapid modernization, shifting religious beliefs and expressions reflect new aspects of the Korean people’s values and identity, in both personal and communal dimensions. We believe that this dynamic backdrop creates a complex web of tensions as Koreans negotiate between established norms and newly infused or internally emerging global ideas, inspiring and provoking efforts to navigate and advocate for future directions both within and beyond the country.



## Contemporary Korean Music in Context

(Edited by) Anna Yates-Lu, Hee Sook Oh

This book encloses an interdisciplinary examination of Korean music’s evolution, contextual interactions, and global positioning from historical, sociocultural, and aesthetic perspectives. It brings together various scholarly contributions to analyse Korean music’s transformations, innovations, and cultural suggestions, with a focus on its historical roots and contemporary manifestations. This book captures the multifaceted dynamics in Korean music, showcasing its adaptability and global importance while addressing cultural identity, tradition, and innovation.



- **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Series ‘Korean Political Economy from a Comparative-Historical Perspective’**  
Edited by Hyeong-ki Kwon (scheduled for publication in the first half of 2026)
- **The 4<sup>th</sup> Series ‘Global Perspectives on Hallyu: History, Theory, and Postcoloniality’**  
Edited by Seok-Kyeong Hong, Sojeong Park (scheduled for publication in the second half of 2026)
- **The 5<sup>th</sup> Series ‘Towards a Symptomatology of K-Futurity’**  
Edited by Hong Jung KIM (scheduled for publication in the first half of 2027)
- **The 6<sup>th</sup> Series ‘The Statehood in Modern and Contemporary Korea’**  
Edited by Jong-Hak Kim (scheduled for publication in the second half of 2027)

## Publication in an Academic Journal

Society and Theory, 52nd, November 2025, pp.83-124

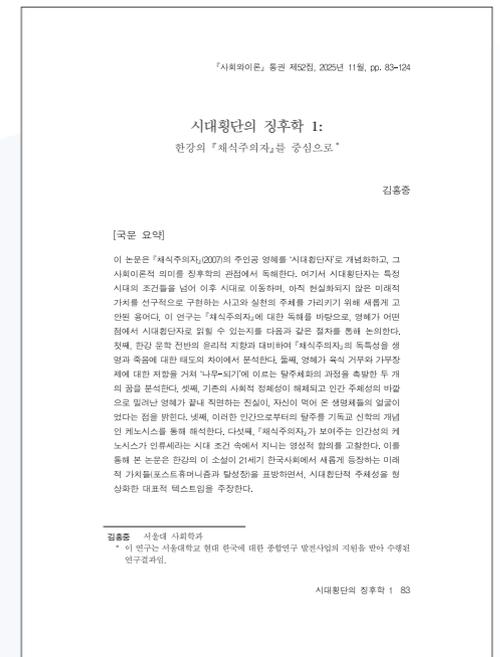
### Symptomatology of Epoch-traverser: Centering on Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*

Hong Jung KIM

This paper conceptualizes the protagonist Yeong-hye in Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian* (2007) as an ‘epoch-traverser’ and reflects on the sociological significance of this figure from the perspective of the symptomatology. The term epoch-traverser designates a subject of thought and practice that moves beyond the conditions of a given historical period into the time that follows, pioneering the enactment of values of the future that have not yet been realized. On the basis of a close reading of *The Vegetarian*, this study explores in what sense Yeong-hye can be understood as an epoch-traverser through following five lines of inquiry.

Key Words: Han Kang, *The Vegetarian*, epoch-traversing, symptomatology, kenosis, patience, Anthropocene

Society and Theory, 52nd, November 2025, pp.83-124  
**Symptomatology of Epoch-traverser: Centering on Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian***  
Hong Jung KIM



『사회이론』 통권 제52집, 2025년 11월, pp. 83-124

시대횡단의 정후학 1:  
한강의 『채식주의자』를 중심으로\*

김홍중

[국문 요약]

이 논문은 『채식주의자』(2007)의 주인공 영혜를 '시대횡단자'로 개념화하고, 그 사회이론적 의미를 정후학의 관점에서 독해한다. 여기서 시대횡단자는 특정 시대의 조건들을 넘어 이후 시대로 이동하며, 아직 현실화되지 않은 미래적 가치를 선구적으로 구현하는 사고와 실천의 주체를 가리키기 위해 새롭게 고안된 용어이다. 이 연구는 『채식주의자』에 대한 독해를 바탕으로, 영혜가 어떤 점에서 시대횡단자로 읽힐 수 있는지를 다음과 같은 질문을 통해 논의한다. 첫째, 영혜의 인간 존재론적 위치를 재고찰하여 『채식주의자』의 독해성을 영혜의 죽음에 대한 태도의 차이에서 분석한다. 둘째, 영혜가 육식 거부와 가부장제에 대한 저항을 거쳐 '니랑~되'기에 이르는 탈주체화의 과정을 추적한 두 개의 궤를 분석한다. 셋째, 기존의 사회적 정체성이 해체되고 인간 정체성의 비결정으로 밀려난 영혜가 갖는 직면하는 진실이, 자신이 먹어 온 생명체들의 얼굴이었다는 점을 밝힌다. 넷째, 이러한 인간으로부리의 탈주를 기독교 신학의 개념인 케노시스를 통해 해석한다. 다섯째, 『채식주의자』가 보여주는 인간성의 케노시스가 인류세라는 시대 조건 속에서 지니는 양상적 함의를 고찰한다. 이를 통해 본 논문은 영혜의 미 소성이(세계)가 한국사회에서 새롭게 등장하는 미래의 가치(포스트모더니즘)의 양상(정)을 표상하면서, 시대횡단적 주체성을 형성하는 대표적 텍스트임을 주장한다.

김홍중 서울대 사회학과  
\* 이 연구는 서울대학교 원혜 연구에 대한 중앙연구 발전사업의 지원을 받아 수행된 연구결과임.

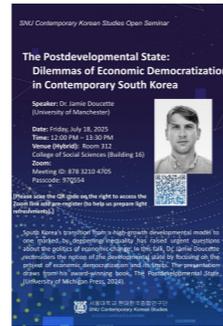
시대횡단의 정후학 1 83

## Research Achievements by Research Teams

### Political Economy

#### Regular Open Seminar Series

The open seminar series brings together scholars from Korea and abroad to foster in-depth understanding of contemporary Korean society and to promote academic exchange



- Post-crisis Restructuring and Development of Chaebols**  
 Analysis of the structural transformation and leadership transition of South Korea's major business groups (chaebol) since the Asian Financial Crisis  
 #Chaebol #Asia #Financial Crisis #Leadership Transition #Korean Economic Transformation
- Korea and the New International Political Economy**  
 Recent changes in international political economy, including the weakening of multilateral norms, the growing role of security considerations in trade policy, strategic trade policy, supply chain resilience, export and investment controls, and the resurgence of industrial policy  
 #Multilateral Norms #Trade Policy #Security #Supply Chain Resilience #International Political Economy
- Divergent Evolution of Statist Coordination Models: A Comparison of Japan and Korea**  
 Analysis of differences between state-led coordination models in South Korea and Japan  
 #StateLedCoordination #SouthKorea #Japan
- The Developmental States of South Korea and Taiwan: Core features and divergent trajectories**  
 Comparative analysis of the developmental state models of South Korea and Taiwan and their core characteristics  
 #South Korea #Taiwan #Developmental State
- Evolution of Technology Sourcing Strategies of Korean Electronics Companies: The case of Samsung Electronics**  
 A comparative analysis of how Korean electronics firms pursue sustainable strategies under global competition with a focus on Samsung Electronics  
 #Samsung Electronics #Technological Autonomy #Global Supply Chains #Research And Development

#### Distributive Politics in the Post-Industrial Era: South Korea from a Macro-Historical Perspective

Analysis of how changes in Korea's economic and industrial structure have affected its distributive politics, and an examination of Korea's policy responses and their implications

#Deindustrialization #Distributive Politics #Macro Historical Perspective #Industrial Structure

#### What Developed Countries Can Learn from South Korea

An analysis of the impact of Korea's economic development experience on developed and developing countries

#Economic Development #Developed Countries #Developing Countries

#### The Failure of Social Partnership in Korea

An examination of structural change in Korean political economy, focusing on technological and industrial transitions and cases of failed social partnership

#Social Partnership #Technology #Industry #Policy

#### Durability of Legislation in Unified vs. Divided Government: Evidence from the 21st Korean National Assembly

A comparative political analysis of legislative processes and the durability of legislative outcomes under unified and divided government, based on an analysis of the 21st National Assembly

#Korean Presidential System #Strong Party Discipline #Post Legislative Volatility #Legislative Outcomes #Government Type #Interparty Cooperation

#### The Postdevelopmental State: Dilemmas of Economic Democratization in Contemporary South Korea

An analysis of structural transformation in Korean political economy through the concept of "economic democratization," and an exploration of the characteristics of the post-developmental state

#Developmental State #Inequality #Instability #Economic Democratization #Structural Transformation

#### Compressed Modernity and Its Risks: The Normal Crisis of South Korea

An analysis of compressed modernity in Korean society and its structural risks, focusing on the notion of a "normalized crisis" and examining the order of Korean democracy and capitalism

#Compressed Modernity #Normalized Crisis #Korean Democracy #Korean Capitalism

## K-Future

### Theory Atelier

A forum for academic exchange and dialogue that brings together leading theorists from Korea and abroad, creating a space for new theoretical experimentation within Korean Studies



#### Deconstructing the Idea of Korea (as Nation)

A reflection on modes of understanding reality grounded in the concepts of nationalism and the nation-state, and a discussion of epochal transformations in the era of (post-)modernity and post-Marxism

#post discourse #uncertainty of modernity #historicity #social configurations

#### Global Korean Studies: Prospects and a Practice

The possibility of interdisciplinary research in which creative interpretation and analytical rigor coexist

#post-disciplinary approach #global Korean Studies #interdisciplinary research #area studies #integrative approach

#### Korean Literature and Comparative Studies:

##### The Possibility of a Centerless Periphery or an Existing Absence

An exploration of how knowledge systems in modern Korea were reconfigured through the formation and reception of translated terms

#translation and knowledge power #de-imperial knowledge production #global Korean Studies #reconfiguration of knowledge

#### Civil War and Hygiene: Horizons of Critique on Capitalist Colonialism

An analysis of the civil war-like political logic that excludes heterogeneity and the resulting obsession with hygiene, examined through the Korean case

#civil war and hygiene #the political #critique of capital colonialism #violence and exclusion #capital-colonialism

#### The Unencumbered Self: Probability, Space-Time, and the Modern Myth of Freedom

An argument that the “unencumbered self,” which underlies traditional interpretations of freedom, rests on a fictional myth of modernity, and that a de-Westernized understanding of the human offers new theoretical implications

#materialism #unencumbered self # materiality and politics #body and society

#### How I Learned to Stop Doing ‘Theory’ and to Love the Soviet

An examination of a Soviet scholar’s personal intellectual trajectory and a reflection on the possibilities and meanings of theory

#personal intellectual history #theory studies #Soviet studies

#### (Back to the) Future Fieldwork – Tapsa and Haptic Methods in Contemporary Korean Studies

An exploration of new forms of spatiality and modes of knowledge production in Korea through fieldwork conducted along urban and non-urban boundaries.

#new normal #Korean Studies methodology #fieldwork #on-site research #cultural geography #tactile methodologies

#### Moishe Postone: A Critical Theory that Critiques Critical Theory

An analysis of Moishe Postone’s critical theory as a response to the discourse on the “crisis of critique,” focusing on its contemporary questions and reconstructive efforts

#Moishe Postone #reconstruction of critical theory #treadmill effect # contradictions of capital

#### Dialogue Between Eastern and Western Civilizations through Habermas’s 2019 Study on Confucianism

A reflection on the possibility of an East Asian modernity inspired by Habermas’s Confucianism research

#Habermas #Confucian studies #East Asian modernity #learning

#### The Queer Politics of the Wounded: Reparation Work and Queer Youth Activism in Korea

An analysis of how Korean LGBTQ student movements transform social trauma into spaces of recovery amid structural harm, and how queer students become political subjects

#recovery work #LGBTQ student movements #queer politics #restorative communities

#### Surviving an Apocalyptic World as Non-Human: Neoliberal Co-mix Storytelling and the Art of “relational survivance”

An analysis of monster and zombie webtoons popular during the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of “worm-time,” and a reflection on the art of “relational survivance”

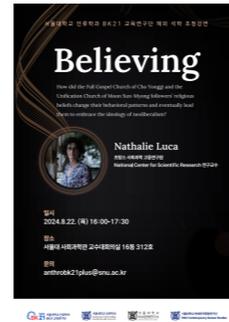
#zombie apocalypse #COVID-19 #posthumanist critique

## Invited Lecture by International Scholar

## Believing

An explanation of how the three layers of cultural, religious, and economic contexts, beliefs, and practices interact and are reconfigured through a “believing system.”

#Korean religion #belief systems #mechanisms of social control  
#neoliberal behavioral patterns



## Values &amp; Identity

## Values and Identity in Korean Society Colloquium

A colloquium addressing key issues surrounding values and identity in Korean society



Samboilbae and Ochetuji  
in the 10.29 Itaewon Disaster Movement:  
Affirmations of the Value of Life and the Establishment of New Identity

An analysis of the impact of religious rituals on bereaved family solidarity and civic responses in the aftermath of social disasters

#bereaved families' solidarity #civic responses #religious rituals

Anti-LGBTQIA+ Discourse and Hate Speech in Korean Protestant Organizations:  
Focusing on Sexuality Education Discourse in Schools

An analysis of the institutionalization of anti-LGBTQ sentiment through the discourses of “healthy sexuality” and “defending the family”

#anti-LGBTQ sentiment #disposal of sex education books #discourse analysis

Korean Political Scandals and Shamanism Rhetoric:  
The Shadow of the 20th Century ‘Musok’

An analysis of the political instrumentalization of shamanism in contemporary Korean society, and an examination of how shamanism uniquely engages with human desire

#shamanism #human desire #political instrumentalization

A Study on Media Reports of Alleged Connections between Celebrities and Protestant NRMs

An analysis of media coverage, tone, and strategies in reports addressing allegations of connections between celebrities and new religious movements

#celebrities #allegations involving new religions #media coverage

Stigma and Charisma:  
The Political Theology of Shincheonji Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis

An analysis of how Shincheonji strengthened its self-legitimation and internal cohesion in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis

#Shincheonji #COVID-19 #self-legitimation, cohesion

Fear, Hatred, and Anger: The Affective Politics of Far-Right Protestantism in South Korea

An analysis of the political voice of far-right Protestant groups through the lens of affective politics

#affective politics #far-right Protestantism #fear #hatred #anger

# Global Hallyu Studies

Active voice related to ongoing research projects and collaborations with scholars based at overseas universities

Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of Global Hallyu Studies, we are building a global research network, sharing information on educational practices, and developing diverse forms of academic activities to identify emerging global research agendas.

## NETFLIX AND SOUTH KOREAN MEDIA IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

A conference examining the impact of Netflix, a leading online streaming platform in the global media market, on the production, distribution, and consumption of Korean cultural industries

- Reading Netflix
- Cinema and cinematic TV in the age of Netflix
- Pandemic, gender, and youth



## 2024 CHS International Conference: Mapping and Theorizing Hallyu

An international conference reflecting on the discursive geography, production, distribution, and texts of Hallyu at a meta-level, and rethinking existing cultural theories and theories of transnational cultural flows

- Discursive geography of Hallyu
- Mapping global impacts of Hallyu, digital Hallyu, negative Hallyu
- Reframing transnational cultural flow theories and creative industries



## Global Hallyu Research Workshop

A three-day international workshop aimed at sharing the current state and challenges of Hallyu research and education across regions, and exploring interdisciplinary expansion and global collaboration in Hallyu Studies

- Institutionalizing Hallyu
- Translating Hallyu
- Theorizing Hallyu beyond borders



## Between Game and Martial Law: The Political Shift in the Series

A special lecture series held as part of a project to share and discuss research findings on Hallyu

- Power and play: a critical political analysis of Korean society and global capitalism through game structures and narratives in television drama
- Global narratives and locality: the global reception of Korean content and its political reframing
- Content and institutions: the expansion of television drama in the context of Korean capitalism and production and distribution structures



## The 1st Hallyu Student Day

A student paper competition designed to identify and cultivate the next generation of Hallyu scholars by encouraging undergraduate and graduate students across disciplines to produce academic work on Korean popular culture and the Hallyu phenomenon

- #Korean popular culture #K-culture phenomena #cultural industries
- #fandom #soft power #public diplomacy #Hallyu and anti-Hallyu



## The 1st SNU Graduate Workshop on Hallyu Studies

An intensive pre-conference workshop for doctoral students in Hallyu Studies from around the world, held as a pre-program of the International Conference on Contemporary Korean Studies

- Expanding the research foundation in Korean Studies and Hallyu research
- Building a research ecosystem through networking the next generation of scholars



## The 2nd Hallyu Student Day

- #popular songs #political participation of K-pop fans
- #audience studies #mental health #globalizations of K-pop
- #adaptive strategies of Hallyu
- #effects of Hallyu on global pop music industry



## K-Narratives

### Narrating Contemporary Korea

A colloquium series critically exploring the symptoms of narratives in contemporary Korea



#### The Philosophy of Fiction and Translation

##### • Fiction without Mimesis: A Comparative Philosophy of Fiction

An exploration of how different cultures understand “fiction” in different ways, and an examination of how fiction is contextually formed within each culture’s metaphysical assumptions

#fiction #mimesis #Plato #the novel #*Dream of the Red Chamber*

##### • Untranslatability, Linguistic Relativity, and Linguistic Essentialism in Korean-English Translation

A critical examination of linguistic essentialism through the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and Emily Apter’s concepts of the “translation zone” and the “Dictionary of Untranslatables”

#untranslatability #Han(恨) #Jeong(情) #we/us

#### K-Drama and Hallyu Dramas

An analysis of how issues such as violence, inequality, and educational pressure in Korean society are transformed into spectacles within Korean television dramas

#K-drama #Hallyu drama #webtoon generation #globalization #digital media #global brands

#### Rewriting Romantic Utopias

An examination of the rise of romance fantasy webtoons, the social meanings of regression and reincarnation narratives, and the cultural significance of romance fantasy as a genre

#*This Life, I Will Be the Lord* #*The Remarried Empress* #noble comics  
#female-centered narratives #romantic utopia

#### Korean Literature and Translation after Han Kang’s Nobel Prize in Literature

A historical review of the translation of Korean literature — from missionary translators to contemporary translators — and an examination of how Korean literature has been received by global readers

#*The Vegetarian* #*We Do Not Part* #*Cursed Bunny* #*Love in the Big City*

#### Masterplots of Reliance, Return, and Escape: Narrative Choices in the Double-Bind Worlds of Korean Film

An analysis of how Korean cinema employs dependence, return, and escape within double-bind situations, with a focus on the concept of the master plot

#dependence #return #escape

#### Survivalism, Meritocracy, Retributivism – The Vicious Cycles of Contemporary K-Narratives

A discussion of whether master plots exist in Korean literature and cultural content, and whether such master plots exhibit forms of national specificity

#master plot #cyclical structures #survivalism #meritocracy #retributivism

#### Accompanying the Specters: Fictional Narratives about the Sewol Ferry Disaster

An analysis of how literary works dealing with the Sewol ferry disaster reflect on national identity and collective memory

#Sewol ferry disaster #collective memory #cultural narratives

#### “When Korean Literature Encounters ‘K’: On the (Dis)Harmony between Korean Literature and ‘K’-Literature”

An analysis of the gap between “K-literature” and “Korean literature,” and a discussion of how K-literature as translated literature can be reconfigured from the perspective of Korean Studies

#K-literature #Korean literature #translated literature #Korean narratives

### Open Seminar

Irregular open seminars inviting domestic and international researchers to foster understanding and engagement with contemporary phenomena in Korea

#### Recent Korean Films and the Underdog Narrative

An examination of the significance of underdog narratives Korean Cinema and an analysis of Korean society and the global context through the social vulnerabilities revealed by these Narratives

#*The Land of Seonghye* #*A Little Princess* #*Nomadland* #*Squid Game* #*Concrete Utopia*



## Modernity & Developmental History

### Korean Modernity and Developmental History: Aporia of the Formation of Korean Modernity and Development

A continuing lecture series examining the formation and characteristics of Korean modernity from multiple disciplinary perspectives, and critically reflecting on the meaning of “development” in the context of modern Korean history



#### Changes in Population Censuses after Liberation and in the 1950s and Their Historical Significance

An exploration of the formation of early “modernity” in contemporary Korean history through an analysis of population censuses conducted before the establishment of the government and in the 1950s

#population census #establishment of the government #1950s #formation of modernity

#### The Emergence of the “Koreanization” Discourse in the Social Sciences in the Mid-to-Late 1960s and the Re-recognition of Tradition

An analysis of how modernity was conceptualized within social science discourse in Korea in the late 1960s

#1960s #social sciences #meaning of modernity #“Koreanization” discourse #re-recognition of tradition

#### From National Self-Reliant Economy to “Jaju Gengsaeng”: The Influence of the Korean War and Foreign Relations on the Formation of North Korea’s Development Strategy

A historical analysis of the formation of North Korea’s economic development strategy and foreign relations strategies

#development history #North Korean development strategy #North Korean foreign relations #economic development

#### The Model Debtor: Korea and the Eurocurrency Market, 1969–1985

An analysis of how Korea overcame its external debt crisis through entry into the Eurocurrency market

#Eurocurrency #1969–1985 #overcoming the external debt crisis

#### How Has Democracy Been Undermined by Developmentalism? The Obsession with “Development” in Korean Intellectual Circles in the 1960s

A critical reflection on developmentalism and development ideology among Korean intellectuals and their intellectual-historical impact on contemporary Korean society

#1960s #developmentalism #development ideology #democracy #intellectual circles

#### The Lowest-Tier Workers of Subcontracted Firms: A Study of Home-Based Labor among Married Women in Seoul

A Reexamination of Women’s Invisible Labor Behind Development and Growth:  
A Study of Home-Based Labor Among Married Women in Seoul

#subcontracted firms #women workers #home-based labor #women’s labor #invisible labor

#### The 1950s Exhibition Masterpieces of Korean Art and the Formation of Korean “Tradition”

An analysis of the cultural impact of development and growth through the case of the Masterpieces of Korean Art exhibition in the 1950s

#1950s #Masterpieces of Korean Art exhibition #cultural impact #development and growth #Korean artifacts

#### Prostitution and What Is Not Prostitution: The South Korean Government’s Tourist Promotion Strategies and Sexualized Face-to-Face Service in the 1950s–60s

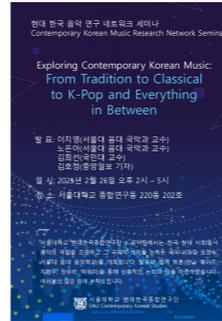
An exploration of how sexualized face-to-face service was implemented as part of South Korea’s development policies in the 1950s and 1960s

#prostitution #sexualized strategies #tourist promotion strategies #development and growth

# Contemporary Korean Music

## Contemporary Korean Music Research Network Seminar

A seminar examining the role of music in contemporary Korean society and highlighting its international significance



### Exploring Contemporary Korean Music: From Tradition to Classical to K-pop and Everything in Between

Addressing the historical traditions and global influence of Korean music, and examining the past and present of Korean music

- The Gayageum: Performance Techniques and Their Contemporary Significance
- The World of the Haegeum
- The Origins of Global Korean Music: Overseas Performances of South Korean Traditional Music during the Cold War
- Are Korean Musicians Highly Competitive? — The History of Participation in International Music Competitions and New Pathways

## Contemporary Korean Music Research Colloquium

A monthly colloquium bringing together scholars from Korea and abroad to discuss diverse musical discourses at the intersection of tradition and innovation



### The Aesthetics of Collaboration between Korean Traditional Performers and American Contemporary Music in the Global Age

Exploring possibilities for collaboration between different musical genres at the intersection of Korean traditional music and American contemporary music

#global age #Korean traditional music #American contemporary music

### Rereading Opera - Encounters Between Western Opera and Korean Stage Interpretation

An analysis of Regietheater-style opera productions, focusing on works directed by Soo-dong Jang, and a presentation of their conceptual definition, historical background, and typology

#Soo-dong Jang's productions #Regietheater #Korean opera directors

### From Geomungo to Squid Game - The Diversity and Expansion of Contemporary Korean Music

• An examination of the historical transformations of the geomungo and its performance practices within twenty-first-century musical styles

#geomungo #Korean traditional music #global age

• An analysis of class-based sound hierarchies in popular culture through the case of the television series Squid Game

#Squid Game #popular culture #class #hierarchy

### The Case of Han Jeongsun: Song in the Fabric of Everyday Life

An exploration of how everyday singing shapes the lives of individuals and communities

#Jeong-seon Han #music and everyday life #individuals and communities

## Statehood & Civil Society

### Theoretical Studies on Modern and Contemporary Korean Statehood

- **Tributary State**

A study of premodern Sino-Korean relations and the East Asian regional order centered on the institutions and ideology of the tributary system

- **Colonial Korea**

A synthesis of social-science theories of colonial regimes and an analysis of the political and socio-historical impact of the colonial legacy on the statehood of the Republic of Korea

- **Legal Status of the Republic of Korea**

A study of the legal status of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea and the question of legal continuity between the provisional government and the post-liberation Republic of Korea

- **North-South Division System**

An analysis of the specificity of the Korean division system and its interrelation with the global Cold War structure

- **Anti-Communist State**

An analysis of South Korean society in the 1960s and 1970s centered on anti-communism

### Studies on Ideology, Thought, and Discourse in Modern and Contemporary Korea

- **Acceptance of Western Civilization and Knowledge in the 19th Century**

An analysis of the reception and Korean reinterpretation of Western political ideas such as liberty, independence, and republicanism

- **Nationalism**

An exploration of the historical origins and characteristics of Korean nationalism and the ideological roots of contemporary conflicts in Korean society

- **Patriarchalism**

A micro-level study of the origins and mechanisms of oppressive social structures in modern and contemporary Korea, centered on patriarchy

- **Japan-Korea Modern Korean History International Seminar**

A comparative exploration of historical understanding in Korea and Japan through an international seminar on modern Korean history

- Lyuh Woon-hyung as an agent of decolonization
- The division of the Korean Peninsula and the issues of Okinawa's status and U.S. military bases
- Japanese debates on turning Korea into a protectorate in the 1900s and the Eulsa Protectorate Treaty



## Organization of International Academic Conferences

### 2024 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

The 1st International Conference in 2024 marked the official launch of Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies and introduced its individual research teams. The conference also provided a forum for dialogue with the audience on the future direction of the Center, including what role Seoul National University should play as a global hub and the appropriate orientation of contemporary Korean Studies.

The 1st International Conference (2024)

**SNU Contemporary Korean Studies**

**2024 1st International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies**

- Date: August 23 (Friday), 2024, 9:30 am–6:50 pm  
August 24 (Saturday), 2024, 10:00 am–6:10 pm
- Venue: Youngwon Hall, Seoul National University Asia Center

**Welcome Address**, August 23, 9:30-10:00 am  
Honglim Ryu, President, Seoul National University

Session 1 **Reimagining Korea: Identity and Values in a Changing World and Korea in Transition**, August 23, 10:00-11:50 am

Session 2 **Political Economy from a Comparative-Historical Perspective**, August 23, 1:00-3:00 pm

Session 3 **The Masterplots of K-Narrative**, August 23, 3:10-5:00 pm

Session 4 **K-Future**, August 23, 5:10-6:50 pm

Session 5 **Korean Modernity and the History of Development**, August 24, 10:00-11:50 am

Session 6 **Global Perspectives on Hallyu**, August 24, 1:00-3:00 pm

Session 7 **Exploring Contemporary Korean Music: From Traditional to Classical to K-Pop and Everything in Between**, August 24, 3:10-4:40 pm

**Roundtable Discussion**, August 24, 4:50-6:20 pm

Contact: SNU Contemporary Korean Studies (snucks@snu.ac.kr)

The 2nd International Conference (2025)

2025  
SNU International Conference  
for Contemporary Korean Studies

**Korea as Symptom**  
Perspectives on the Future

August 22–23, 2025 (Fri–Sat)  
Asia Center (Building 101) 2F  
Seoul National University

The 2025 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies (ICCKS) explores the diverse phenomena of contemporary South Korea under the theme **Korea as Symptom: Perspectives on the Future**.  
By reading South Korea's current issues—from democratic crisis to cultural innovation—as interconnected symptoms of broader historical and global processes, the conference invites critical reflection and seeks to develop new perspectives on Korea's past, present, and future.

QR code: snucks2025@gmail.com

Seoul National University (서울대학교)  
SNU Contemporary Korean Studies (서울대학교 현대한국문화연구소)

### 2025 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

From August 22 to 23, 2025, Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies hosted the 2nd International Conference on Contemporary Korean Studies under the theme “Korea as Symptom.” The conference consisted of a total of 22 sessions, including a roundtable, and brought together 236 scholars from 15 countries, including Korea, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, China, and India.

#### Participants

**236** researchers from **15** countries

(including Korea, USA, Canada, the UK, Germany, France, China, and India)

#### Program

**68** presentation in **22** sessions

(including roundtables)

The closing roundtable of the conference offered a comprehensive theoretical and philosophical reflection on the theme “Korea as Symptom.” Rather than reducing contemporary Korea to a single explanatory framework, participants engaged in a symptom-oriented reading to identify the multilayered and contradictory signs of contemporary Korean society. On this basis, the Center articulated the need for future research that is both multilayered and interdisciplinary.

2025 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

## Session Highlights

### Korean Political Economy



The session examined and discussed key issues in Korean political economy — including gender, labor, and digitalization — from an international perspective.

- Gendered Polarization among Young Koreans: Young Men's Conservative Turn in the 2022 Presidential Election
- Tripartism and the Politics of Social Pacts in South Korea: Institutional Evolution and Strategic Dilemmas
- Capitalism vs. Capitalism - India and Korean Experiences in the Comparative Perspective
- Digitalization in Japan and Korea

### Korean Democracy at a Crossroads: Historical and Comparative Perspectives



The session examined how Korean democracy has been formed and developed, and by assessing its current condition, drew out its political implications.

- How Liberal Democracy Became the “Founding Doctrine” of South Korea: A Conceptual History of Chayuminjujuui from 1945 to 1963
- Liberal Transition of Korean Democracy after 1987
- Democratic Backsliding by Invitation: The People Power Party and South Korea's Constitutional Crisis
- Dissensual Citizenship in Contemporary Korea

### South Korea and Post-Cold War Geopolitics

The session presented changes within and beyond Korea in the post-Cold War geopolitical order and analyzed Korea's political position in a global context.

- Promoting Human Rights and Democracy in Today's World: Digital Activism, Popular Culture and Environmental Advocacy Among South Korean Youth
- Korean Peninsula and Romania in the Context of Collapse of Communist Bloc and the Reshaping of New Geopolitical Order
- From War to Cultural Exchange: The Evolution of Korea-Vietnam Relations as Symptom of Geopolitical Transformation

### Walking as Object-Method in Korean Studies: Modeling Future Trends for Conducting Fieldwork in the Social Sciences



The session introduced an “object-method” approach that blurs the boundary between research objects and research methods through the everyday practice of walking, and proposed a social-scientific methodology for exploring the landscapes, technologies, and communities of Korean society.

- Walking along the DMZ Peace Trail as Object-Method to Reconsider Post-Traumatic Space in the South Korean Border Zone
- Walking Empowerment: Civil Society and the Making of Paths
- Summoning Pre-Technological Technologies: The Politics of Walking in South Korea, 1960s and 1970s
- Walking with the Moving Fieldsite: Doing Mobile Ethnography in Digital Nomad Research

## Reading Cultural Symptoms of Korea



Under the theme “Reading Korea’s Cultural Symptoms,” the session examined signs of Korean society across three distinct domains through the lenses of affect, assemblage, and neoliberal adaptation.

- Sympathy as Symptom: K-Drama Mediation and Communal Affect
- Behind and Beyond the Logic of Imitation: From Assemblage of Chips to the K in Action
- The Rise of Neoliberalism in South Korea: Success or Failure, Dream or Nightmare?

## Religion, Culture, and Political Identity in Korea I



By analyzing the intersections of religion, culture, and politics in Korean society through the perspectives of religious nationalism, media representation, and political myth, the session offered a multilayered view of the complex dimensions of Korean identity.

- Sacralizing the Nation: New Religions and Korea’s Place in the World
- Evolving Representation of Mudang in Korean Television
- A Short Critique of Korea’s Political Mythology in the Post-Park Chung Hee Era

## Religion, Culture, and Political Identity in Korea II



The session explored the intersection of religion and Korean politics and proposed a new analytical framework for understanding contemporary Korean politics through religion.

- Korean Political Scandals and Shamanism Rhetoric
- Stigma and Charisma: The Political Theology of Shincheonji Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis
- Fear, Hatred, and Anger: The Affective Politics of Far-Right Protestantism in South Korea

## Queer Representation in Contemporary Korean Fiction



Focusing on representations of queerness in Korean literature, the session examined their social and cultural meanings and reflected on the contemporary position and social implications of Korean queer literature.

- The Utopia of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Korean Fictions
- Geopolitical Configurations of Korean Queer Narratives and the Stalemate of Global Queer Discourse

## Korean Narrative Today I: Inventing a Way of Living in Margin



By examining marginal identities in Korean society through diverse cultural and theoretical frameworks, the session offered a multilayered analysis encompassing trauma, gender, and queerness, and explored the processes through which social narratives are constructed in Korea.

- Trauma and the Monstrous-Feminine in Korean On-Screen Media
- Queer Future in Worn-Out Stories: A Queer Reading of Love in the Big City

## Korean Narrative Today II: Gleaning the Shards of History



Through the contrasting cases of the “true crime” genre and K-romance music, the session explored how Korean narratives are being reconfigured through digital culture and popular music.

- Korea as a Narrative: Digital Mediation Through True Crime
- In Perfect Harmony? Constructing Complex Female Characters and Their Relationships Through Music in K-Dramas

## Narrative Alternatives Imagining the Post-1987 System



The session examined post-democratization Korean society through literary works and analyzed contemporary Korea by addressing the political meaning of public squares through alternative narratives and the representation of law in artistic works.

- The Square Changes Words; Words Change the Square
- Justice and Community Beyond the Law: Questions and Responses in Korean Literature and Film after 1987

## Migration Issues and Gender Inequality in Korea



By analyzing the oral histories of adoptees with disabilities, the generational experiences of Korean migrants in Germany, and the realities of migrant workers in Korea, the session examined the intersections of migration, gender, disability, generation, and race.

- Disability, Migration, and (Non) Labor
- You Have to Be Better Than the Germans: Discrimination Experiences of Korean Labor Migrants in Germany
- Global Labor Mobility: The Lives of Migrant Workers in South Korea and Their Families in Origin Countries

## The Political and Social Landscape of Korea



By addressing diverse topics such as protest culture and ultra-low fertility, the session offered a comprehensive overview of multiple discourses shaping contemporary Korean society.

- Cultural Productions of Resistance: The Gwangju Uprising and Its Legacy in South Korean Protest Culture
- The Legacy of Population Control: How Cold War Politics Shaped South Korea's Fertility Crisis

## Hallyu in Global Context



By examining Hallyu in an international context, the session analyzed how Korean popular culture generates diverse cultural discourses as it is received abroad and is subsequently reinterpreted through its interaction with local cultures.

- A Full-Package Production Model: The Development of New Runaway Production in the Netflix Era
- South Korea and Hallyu: An Alternative Globalization in the Multipolar World
- Imagining 'Han Nü': Discursive Construction of Contemporary Korean Womanhood on a Chinese Digital Platform
- Globalising Masculinities: When Traditional Mizo Pasaltha (War Heroes) Meets South Korea's Soft Masculinity

## K-pop, Fandom and Cultural Practices

Focusing on K-pop fandom, the session demonstrated how K-pop has evolved beyond popular music into a form of cultural practice across the world, and explored social change mediated through music.

- Anything to Say to Your Fans?: Gendered Fandom and Labor in Korean Esports
- Self-Made K-pop Photocards in South Africa: Local Fan Practices as a Way of Dealing with South Korean Popular Culture
- Performing Korea: K-pop Cover Dance and the Transformation of Public Space in France
- K-poppers and Hip Hoppers in Beijing: Dance, Professions, and Mobilities

## K-pop and Activism

Focusing on K-pop fandom, the session demonstrated how K-pop has evolved beyond popular music into a form of cultural practice across the world, and explored social change mediated through music.

- Music and Activism: Historical Perspectives
- Repurposing K-pop Fandom Infrastructure in Social Activism
- K-pop Fandom, Gender, Queer, and Resistance
- Relation between K-pop Fan Activism and Consumer Rights
- K-pop and Political Mobilization
- K-pop, Anti-Korean Sentiment, and Fan Resistance

## Foreign Policy Narratives toward South Korea

The session analyzed strategic narratives surrounding Japan's, China's, and the United States' policies toward Korea and explored Korea's position in international politics, contributing to an understanding of the structural context of Korean Peninsula diplomacy.

- Japan's Strategic Narrative towards South Korea
- China's Korean Diplomacy Narratives in the Xi Jinping Era
- US Strategic Narratives on East Asian Allies under Retrenchment
- Elite Victim or Elite Power? Korea's Victimhood Narratives and Status-Seeking in the World

## Telling the Stories of Other Korea



By introducing narratives based on diverse perspectives on Korean history, the session revealed alternative images of Korea that have remained largely overlooked.

- Strange Politics in Early Modern East Asia: The Objective Value of Fictionalized History
- Revisiting Historical East Asia: A Reflection on and from Ancient Korea
- Trust in the Digital Age? Digital CBMs, Track II Diplomacy, and North Korea's Cyber Challenge

## Perspectives on the Statehood of Modern and Contemporary Korea



The session explored the formation of the modern Korean state from multiple perspectives and offered a comprehensive account of the complexity and historical trajectories of Korean statehood.

- The Protestant Work Ethic and the Origin of Korean Enlightenment Nationalism, 1896-1900
- Education as an Instrument of Colonial Rule?: Hegemonic Competition and the Educational System in Colonial Korea
- Decolonization and Dependent Development in Korea
- Hetero-Authoritarianism: Toward Embodied Histories of State and Society in 'Hot War' South Korea

**SNUCKS**

**Seoul National University  
Contemporary Korean Studies**

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