

UW-Madison, Department of History

Hist 200: Films and Historical Understanding – Korea

Seminars: Sterling 1339, F 1:20-3:30

Film Screenings: TBA, W 7:00-9:00

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South Korean national cinema has evolved in close connection with the country's major transformations from 1945 to 2010. In this course, we will investigate South Korean feature films with the aim of gaining a rich and textured understanding of the nation's past and present. We will examine older films to learn about the politics, economy, and social relations of key time periods in the past. We will also watch recent films in order to chart changes in society and to examine salient aspects of collective memories about the colonial era (1910-1945), national division (1945-present), and postcolonial economic development (1961-1987). At the same time, while South Korean cinema is the subject matter of this course, one of my aims for is to help students develop the tools to watch and analyze films (of any country) with a historian's eye. To this end, we will also be reading academic writings about South Korean history and society, as well as brief essays designed to help you analyze and write about films.

Students with no previous knowledge of South Korea or South Korean film are welcome.

Required Text:

Timothy CORRIGAN, *A Short Guide To Writing About Film*, 6th ed. (New York: Longman, 2007)

Course Reader, available at 1650 Humanities

Assignments:

- (1) Attendance and Participation: For our Friday seminar meetings, we will discuss the film of the week in conjunction with the assigned readings. So it is essential that you do the readings before class **and** that you come to class ready to share your impressions and pose questions about them. In-class participation will make up 15% of the final grade.

- (2) Film Postings: These are short responses (250-500 words) that you will post on the course site on Learn@UW by 12 p.m. Thursday (i.e., between our weekly film screening and our Friday seminar.) Your top 5 response grades will go toward your final grade for the semester. (You're welcome to post more than 5 responses.) Film postings are not formal papers, but quick and intelligent responses to the weekly film. On most weeks, I will post a question to get the ball rolling. You may choose to address the question, or you may go with the flow of the discussion thread. Your film postings should not summarize or describe the films that we watch. Instead, I'm looking for: (1) your personal response to the film; (2) analysis of interesting characters, themes, and plot developments in the film; and (3) a discussion of how the film relates to readings and films that we have read and watched. It isn't necessary to cover all three of these bases in every posting. More than anything, I'm looking for clear, focused, and thoughtful discussions. I recommend writing them soon after watching and reflecting over the weekly screening. Make sure to give yourself time to read each other's postings before we meet on Friday afternoon.
- (3) In-class Film Response: Every Friday, a pair of students will give a 10-minute presentation about the weekly film. Weekly presenters should meet some time between the Wednesday screening and the Friday seminar to talk about the film and to make plans for the Friday presentation. You can give a *very* brief synopsis of the film, followed by personal impressions, an analysis of important points, and a discussion of the film's connection to course readings or previous films. You will each give one film response this semester, and it will count for 10% of the final grade. I encourage you to engage in Internet research to find information that is relevant to the film. Consult the list of online resources on the back of this syllabus.
- (4) Supplementary Report: Every Friday, a pair of students will give a 10-minute report on **asterisked** weekly readings. I want you to focus on how these readings shed light on and improve our understanding of the weekly film. For this assignment, I also encourage you to engage in Internet research to find relevant information. This report will count for 10% of the final grade.
- (5) Midterm Paper: You will write two papers this semester. The first paper, due March 19, is a short paper (1,000-1,250 words.) It will be an analysis of a Korean War film of your choosing. This paper will count for 15% of your final grade.
- (6) Individual Presentation: Each of you will select an additional film, which you will present on in one of our final class sessions. Your individual presentation will count for 15% of the final grade.
- (7) Final Paper: Your final paper will be a written analysis and discussion about the film you select for the individual presentation. Based on questions and comments from your individual presentation, you can sharpen and expand your original discussion. The final paper (1,500-2,000 words) will make up 20% and will be due May 14.

(8) Extra Credit: You may earn extra credit if you participate in a second film response or supplementary report.

(9) Recap of Grading:

Attendance and Class Participation – 15%

In-class Film Response (in pairs) – 10%

Supplementary Report (in pairs) – 10%

Film Postings on Learn@UW – 15%

Midterm Paper – 15%

Individual Presentation – 15%

Final Paper – 20%

Film Screenings: We will watch films on Wednesday nights (7:00-9:00 p.m.). LOCATION TBA

Fri., 1/22: Preliminaries

Introduction

Wed., 1/27: *Wang ūi namja (The King and the Clown, dir. LEE, Jun-ik, 2005, 119 min.)*

Fri., 1/29: *For a very general introduction to Korean history.*

Charles K. ARMSTRONG, *The Koreas* (London: Routledge, 2007), 1-17

For a brief overview of new Korean cinema:

Darcy PAQUET, “A Short History of Korean Cinema”

<http://www.koreanfilm.org/history.html>

For historical background behind Yōnsangun and Chang Nok-su.

LEE, Ki-baik, *A New History of Korea* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1984), 204-206

*"Deciphering the Kings," *The Korea Herald*, March 22, 1999

*"Chang Nok-su — Unbeatable Temptress," *The Korea Times*, October 4, 1999

*"Women in Royal Court Mired in Power Politics," *The Korea Times*, November 15, 1999

On the question of sexuality in the film:

*KIM, Young-gwan & HAHN, Sook-ja, "Homosexuality in ancient and modern Korea," *Culture, Health, & Sexuality* 8:1 (January-February 2006), 59-65.

*Norimitsu ONISHI, "Seoul Journal: Gay-Themed Film Gives Closet Door a Tug," *The New York Times*, March 31, 2006.

On watching and thinking about films

Michael D. GOSE, *Getting Reel: A Social Science Perspective on Film* (Youngston, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2006), 10-15, 46-51

On writing about films

Corrigan, 6-14

Part I: Korean War Memories

Wed., 2/3: *Spring in My Hometown* (*Arûmdaun sijôl*, dir. LEE, Kwang-mo, 1998, 120 min.)

Fri., 2/5: Michael E. ROBINSON, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 100-120

*YUN, Heung-gil, "Rainy Spell" (Changma, 1978), in *The Rainy Spell and Other Korean Stories* (Armonk, N.Y.: East Gate, 1998), 153-203

Corrigan, 14-16, 18-35

Wed., 2/10: *Obalt'an* (*Stray Bullet*, dir. YU, Hyôn-mok, 1961, 110 min.)

Fri., 2/12: Charles KIM, "Unlikely Revolutionaries: South Korea's First Generation and the Student Protests of 1960," excerpts

Bruce CUMINGS, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 301-309

Kathleen MCHUGH & Nancy ABELMANN, "Introduction: Genre, Gender, and National Cinema," in *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 1-7

Eungjun MIN, Jinsook JOO, and Han Ju KWAK, *Korean Film: History, Resistance, and Democratic Imagination* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 42-47

*YI, Pôm-sôn, "A Stray Bullet" (Obalt'an, 1958), in *Flowers of Fire* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1974), 205-232

*SONG, Byungsoo, "Shorty Kim," in *Modern Korean Short Stories* (New York: Larchwood Publications Ltd., 1981), 252-275

Corrigan, 36-57

Wed., 2/17: *Ch'oeu ûi chûngin* (*The Last Witness*, dir. YI, Tu-yong (check), 1980, 154 min.)

Fri., 2/19: *CHO, Chong-Rae, *Playing with Fire* (*Pulkkot nori*, 1982) (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University East Asia, 1997)

Assignment: Before class on Friday, choose a Korean War-related film for your first paper.

Part 2: Living Through the Era of Authoritarian Developmentalism

Wed., 2/24: *Mabu* (*A Coachman*, dir. KANG, Tae-jin, 1961, 97 min.)

Fri., 2/26: Michael E. ROBINSON, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 121-129

Michael E. SETH, *Education Fever* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 1-6

*Nancy ABELMANN, "Melodramatic Texts and Contexts: Women's Lives, Movies, and Men," in *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 43-64

*LEE, Ho-Chul, "Wasting Away" (Tarajinûn saldûl, 1962), in *Panmunjom and Other Stories by Lee Ho-Chul* (Norwalk, Conn.: Eastbridge, 2006), 73-89

Corrigan, 58-80

Wed., 3/3: *Samp'o kanûn kil* (*A Road To Sampo*, dir. YI, Man-hûi, 1975, 101 min.)

Fri., 3/5: Michael E. ROBINSON, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 129-139

*KIM, Sûng-ok, "Record of a Journey to Mujin," (Mujin kihaeng, 1964), *Korea Journal* 17:6 (June

1977), 13-27

*HWANG, Sôg-yông, "The Road To Sampo" (Samp'o kanûn kil, 1974), in *The Road to Sampo and Other Korean Short Stories* (Seoul: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1983), 1-23

*YOON, Taek-Lim, "Locality, Women, and History: Local History Research from a Feminist Perspective," *Korea Journal* 38:2 (Summer 1998), 82-90

Seung Hyun PARK, "Korean Cinema after Liberation: Production, Industry, and Regulatory Trends, in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), 16-21

Corrigan, 82-95

Wed., 3/10: *Arûmdaun ch'ôngnyôn Chôn T'aeil* (*A Single Spark*, dir. PARK, Kwang-su, 1995, 96 min.)

Fri., 3/12: *CHOI, Jang Jip, "Political Cleavages in South Korea," in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 13-50

*Walden BELLO, *Dragons in Distress: Asia's Miracle Economies in Crisis* (San Francisco: The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1990), 24-45

Seung Hyun PARK, "Korean Cinema after Liberation: Production, Industry, and Regulatory Trends," in *Seoul Searching* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), 22-31

Corrigan, 95-108

Wed., 3/17: *Pakha sat'ang* (*Peppermint Candy*, dir. LEE, Chang-dong, 2000, 130 min.)

Fri., 3/19: *CHANG, Kyung-Sup, "Compressed modernity and its discontents: South Korean society in transition," *Economy and Society* 28:1 (February 1999), 30-55

FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Part 3: Contemporary Cinema

Wed., 3/24: *8 wôl ûi kûrisûmasû* (*Christmas in August*, dir. HUR, Jin-ho, 1998, 97 min.)

Fri., 3/26: *Darcy PAQUET, "Christmas in August and Korean Melodrama," in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 37-54

*HWANG, Sun-wôn, "Cloudburst" (Sonagi, 1956), in *Shadows of a Sound: Stories* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1990), 56-65

SPRING BREAK

Wed., 4/7: *Yôpkijôgin kû nyô (My Sassy Girl*, dir. KWAK, Jae-young, 2001, 137 min.)

Fri., 4/9: Anthony C. Y. LEONG, *Korean Cinema: The New Hong Kong* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford, 2002), 11-22

*Julian STRINGER, "Putting Korean Cinema in its Place: Genre Classifications and the Contexts of Reception," in *New Korean Cinema* (New York: New York University Press, 2005, 95-105

*David DESSER, "Timeless, Bottomless Bad Movies: Or, Consuming Youth in the New Korean Cinema," in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 73-95

Michael D. GOSE, *Getting Reel: A Social Science Perspective on Film* (Youngston, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2006), 53-54

TOPIC PROPOSAL FOR INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION & FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Wed., 4/14: *Kûttae kû saram tûl (President's Last Bang*, dir. IM, Sang-soo, 2005, 102 min.)

OR

Kidam (Epitaph, dir. Jeong Brothers, 2007, 98 min.)

Fri., 4/16: *Hyung-A KIM, *Korea's development under Park Chung Hee: Rapid industrialization, 1961-1979* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 7-10

*Carter ECKERT, "Total War, Industrialization, and Social Change in Late Colonial Korea," in *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 33-39

*CHUNG, Youn-tae, "Refracted Modernity and the Issue of Pro-Japanese Collaborators in Korea," *Korea Journal* 42:3 (Autumn 2002), 47-56

*"Park Chung-hee's trail of blood," *Hankyoreh*, November 6, 2009

Wed., 4/21: Students' Choice

Fri., 4/23: Corrigan, 109-126

Wed., 4/28: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Fri., 4/24: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Wed., 5/5: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Fri., 5/7: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Fri., 5/14: FINAL PAPER DUE