

## **GESM 120g: Seminar in Humanistic Inquiry**

### **“Contemporary Korean Film and Culture”**

Fall 2024

Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00 - 12:20 pm

DMC 254

**Instructor:** Lindsay S. R. Jolivette

**Office:** THH (Taper Hall) 356T

**Office Hours:** 9:30-10:30 a.m. Tuesday, and 1:00-2:00 p.m. Thursday

#### **Description of the Class**

This class is an introduction to the ways narratives and cinematography in contemporary South Korean films construct cultural understandings of what “Korea” is. Together, we will examine how contemporary Korean cinema is in dialogue with sociocultural, political, and historical realities while simultaneously creating fictional imaginations of what being Korean means in the past, present, and future. The films and readings assigned consist of exemplary works organized into two thematic units focused on how cinema takes part in: 1) The making of “national” identities for Korea, and 2) Imagining Korea’s future through speculative genres. In this class we will work together to understand how the films we watch reinforce, reinterpret, or restructure these themes of nation and future, thereby gaining a greater appreciation for contemporary cinema’s role as a medium that both constructs and reflects culture.

#### **Learning Objectives**

Skills Objectives - Students will learn:

- Film analysis, both formal and narrative
- Academic writing, especially thesis-driven argumentation
- Cultural studies methods of analyzing media
- How to formulate and express original ideas via research and the written word

Knowledge Objectives - Students will learn:

- A solid foundation for recognizing trends in contemporary Korean cinema and culture.
- Major historical, social, and cultural characteristics of the contemporary societies that inform filmmakers, audiences, and understandings of Korean cinema.
- The critical languages of cinema so that you will be able to describe the formal features of a film and perform complex analysis of film as a medium.
- To recognize and interpret specific cultural themes, events, and objects in visual media.

## **Assignments**

### **In-Class Activities (10%)**

Every class you will be asked to complete an activity that results in something you can turn in. These assignments will include, but are not limited to, scene analysis exercises, pop quizzes, written reflections, and group worksheets. Think of these activities as the practice for your larger assignments later in class where you can work on your comprehension, writing, and analysis skills. There are absolutely no make-ups for in-class activities so if you miss class, you receive a zero for that day. However, each of you is allotted one (1) excused absence without explanation – because sometimes life happens!

### **Annotated Readings (10%)**

This is a weekly homework assignment to be completed and turned in to the “content” section of Brightspace before class on Thursdays. You are required to submit proof of at least one full page annotated. You may submit the page within the whole PDF itself, or submit a screen capture image file of it, or submit the page in whatever format you find easiest. We will discuss the details of how to complete this assignment in class.

### **Midterm Exam (20%)**

For this midterm, you will be asked to analyze a selection of scenes from the films we have watched so far in the class. I will show a scene on screen two times, then you will be expected to use the knowledge you’ve gained in the class to write a polished short essay analyzing the significance of the scene. What you focus on in terms of framing the scene within historical, cinematic, and cultural relevance is up to you, but you must have a clear point to your answer (in other words, your answer should not be a summary, it should be *analysis*).

### **Paper #1 (20%)**

For this assignment, you will submit a 7-to-8-page paper focusing on the themes of nationalism and national identity in films that we have discussed in the first part of our class. You should focus on taking the information you were tested on in the midterm and transitioning that into a long-form piece of analytical writing that considers both cinematic and cultural elements. A cohesive thesis argument will be expected, and you must use at least 2 of the readings from class to serve as your secondary sources alongside your chosen film.

### **Paper #2 (20%)**

For this assignment, you will write a 7-to-8-page paper on the disaster and/or sci-fi films covered in class and how you think the genre, narrative, cinematography (or combination) make the films a culturally relevant example of the concept of thinking about national futures. This paper will be an exercise to gauge your understanding of the methods of close reading, film analysis, and cultural context we’ve covered in class. Again, a cohesive thesis argument will be expected. Additionally, you must use at least 2 of the readings assigned in class and one additional reading from the list below to serve as your scholarly evidence for your thesis. The possible sources are as follows:

## **Additional Sources**

“Re-Visions and Re-Imaginations in Asian Speculative Fiction” by Susan Philip and Surinderpal Kaur (2020)

“The Imagination of Disaster” by Susan Sontag (1961)

“Putting Korean cinema in its place: genre classifications and the contexts of reception” by Julian Stringer (2005)

"Progress Versus Utopia, or, Can We Imagine the Future?" by Fredric Jameson (1982)

“Panic Sites: The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from Godzilla to Akira” by Susan Napier (1993)

“Robo Sapiens Japonicus: Humanoid Robots and the Posthuman Family” by Jennifer Robertson (2007)

“Three ‘ecological monsters’ in Bong Joon-Ho’s films” by Imanjaya<sup>1</sup>, Amelia, and Meilani (2020)

“Cli-fi” in *The Oxford Handbook of New Science Fiction Cinemas*

“South Korean Science Fiction” in *The New Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*

## **Final Exam Paper (20%)**

For your final paper, which serves as your final exam, you will be asked to revise one of your original papers, either paper one or two, into a more polished version. This version must be better written from a technical standpoint and should have a stronger argument. Though not required, to strengthen your paper’s argument you may want to add a second film to create a comparative paper that builds on your initial work, or you may add an additional genre to your argument to add more dimension to your interpretation of a single film, e.g. overlaps in disaster and science fiction. You will be graded on how much improvement there has been in your ability to analyze film, understand cultural significance, and make compelling arguments based on cinematic evidence.

## **Assignment Extension Policy**

Late assignments will have a 5 point per 24 hours deduction unless you receive an approved extension. If you are unable to meet a course deadline, contact me before an assignment’s due date to request an extension. Together we can negotiate a reasonable extension timeline, and if necessary, a reasonable grading penalty. Remember these two things: 1) there is no shame in asking for help, and 2) it is always better to turn *something* in rather than get a zero on an assignment.

## **Grade Breakdown**

<b>Assessment Tool (assignments)</b>	<b>% of Grade</b>
In-Class Activities	10
Annotated Readings	10
Midterm	20
Paper #1	20
Paper #2	20
Final Paper	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

## **Writing Format**

All written work should be submitted in 12-point Times New Roman font. All referenced material, including required course texts, should be cited, and all citations must consistently follow MLA or Chicago guidelines (see [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html) for style guides). Page count for assignments does not include the bibliography.

Some things to remember about your papers:

- These are assignments about making arguments, not about summarizing.
- Projects must have a thesis and it must be clearly stated.
- There is no one right answer, but good answers have specific evidence drawn from films.
- All projects should have titles, and a good title is based on the thesis argument.

## **Rubric**

Written work will be graded on five main criteria:

1. *Thesis*: clear, original argument that covers all themes in the body of the paper
2. *Analysis*: evidence and development of argument in body paragraphs, support of thesis
3. *Use of Texts*: proper use, comprehension, relevance, integration, and balance
4. *Formatting and Citation*: see “Writing Format” above, proper citation and grammar
5. *Style*: organization, flow, rhetorical devices, tone, transitions, etc.

## Classroom Norms

### *Respect, Inclusivity, and Professionalism*

These are the three tenets by which our discussions will be led. While you learn critical analysis in this class, it is important to remember that being critical of something and criticizing someone are not the same thing. We will respect each other's time and energy in this class by engaging in constructive conversations rather than attacking or criticizing when we don't agree with something. Everyone's voice matters! And that means giving every person in the room space to speak and creating a respectful environment in which they feel safe doing so.

## Technology Hardware/Software Requirements

**Brightspace:** Please check your school e-mail address and the course website at Brightspace learning platform regularly for announcements and updates. Emails are sent to the address you have registered in the school system and announcements will show up on your Brightspace app. The Brightspace course page is where you will find all of your readings and assignment turn-ins, and occasionally we will use it for in-class activities.

**Films:** You must view the films for each week before class. Access to the films is listed in the weekly "content" section of Brightspace. If you do not have access to a computer, you may borrow one from the university (which I can help you with), or you can use the screening computers through the library. *I suggest you download the program VLC Media Player for watching the films.*







- **Do I need to worry about course content? What's the MPA warning label for this class?** I want you to feel safe in this class, but I need your help to make sure that happens. Throughout the semester we will engage with a variety of texts, including some that contain graphic, violent, and sexually explicit content that may be disturbing to engage with. Please discuss any concerns you may have with me privately as soon as possible (either over email, after class, or in office hours). You are responsible for navigating the materials of the class and I am happy to give outlines or discuss specifics so that you may appropriately engage with materials that are likely to be emotionally challenging for you. While we may not always agree with the things that occur in a film, it is important to analyze why the content is the way it is rather than dismissing it because we personally struggle with it.

**Tech in Class:** You may use laptops or tablets to take notes during lecture or for other class-related activities like pulling up the film or reading for the week to cite specific scenes/passages during discussion. Cell phones should be stowed in your bag or pocket for the duration of the class (unless you do not have a laptop and are using the phone for Brightspace). When we work in groups or are currently doing a discussion-based activity you will also generally be asked to close everything down so you can better participate in discussion with your classmates. I will also at times ask you to write on paper to turn something in for an activity, at which point you may also be asked to shut your tech down.







## Course Schedule

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Developing Korea's National Identity Through Cinema</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction to Film and Culture</b> <b>August 27<sup>th</sup> &amp; 29<sup>th</sup></b>  📖 <u>Reading:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction to Basic Film Analysis Terms PDFs</li><li>• "Cultural Studies" entry in the <i>Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies</i></li><li>• "South Korea" entry in the <i>Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies</i></li></ul>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Introduction to Film and Culture</b> <b>September 3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 5<sup>th</sup></b>  📖 <u>Reading:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "A Brief History of Korean Cinema" by Cho Junhyoung (2019)</li><li>• "Films as Cultural Artefacts" by Machunwangliu Kamei (2019)</li></ul>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>National Identity – Tradition</b> <b>September 10<sup>th</sup> &amp; 12<sup>th</sup></b>  📖 <u>Reading:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Sopyonje: Its Cultural and Historical Meaning" by Cho Hae Joang (2002)</li><li>• "The Struggle for Independence and the Birth of Rival Regimes Japanese Colonial Rule and U.S.-Soviet Occupation (1910~1948)" in <i>Brief History of Korea</i> by Young Ick Lew (2000)</li></ul> 🎧 <u>Media:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Im Kwon-taek, <i>Sopyonje</i> (1993, 112 min.)</li></ul>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>National Identity - Modernity</b> <b>September 17<sup>th</sup> &amp; 19<sup>th</sup></b>  📖 <u>Reading:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Peppermint Candy: The Will Not to Forget" by Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park (2005)</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Nation-Building and Modernization in a Divided Korea from a Hot War to an Armed Truce (1950s~1990s)” in <i>Brief History of Korea</i> by Young Ick Lew (2000)</li> </ul> <p>📺 <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lee Chang-dong, <i>Peppermint Candy</i> (1999, 130 min.)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b>	<p><b>National Identity - Disruption</b> <b>September 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup></b></p> <p>📖 <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Genre” entry in the <i>Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies</i></li> <li>• “<i>The Host</i> (2006): Life in Excess” by Peter Y. Paik (2019)</li> </ul> <p>📺 <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bong Joon-ho, <i>The Host</i> (2006, 119 min.)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b>	<p>📅 <b>Midterm Review and Midterm</b> <b>October 1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review on Tuesday</li> <li>• Exam on Thursday</li> </ul>
<b>Section 2</b>	<p><b>Imagining Korea’s Future Through Genre Cinema</b></p>
<b>Week 7</b>	<p><b>Natural Disasters on the Rise, pt. 1</b> <b>October 8<sup>th</sup> &amp; Fall Recess</b></p> <p>📖 <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Disaster Film” entry in the <i>Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies</i></li> <li>• “Disaster Narratives in South Korean Cultural Imaginary” by Joanna Elfving-Hwang (2015)</li> </ul> <p>📺 <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tidal Wave</i> (2009, 120 min.)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Week 8</b></p>	<p><b>Natural Disasters on the Rise, pt. 2</b>  <b>October 15<sup>th</sup> &amp; 17<sup>th</sup></b></p> <p> <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Imagination of Eco-disaster: Post-disaster rebuilding in Asian cinema” by Kiu-Wai Chu (2019)</li> <li>• “Disposable Heroes” by Yokota Takashi (2012)</li> </ul> <p> <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pandora</i> (2016, 136 min.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 9</b></p>	<p> <b>Paper #1 Due</b>  <b>October 22<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 24<sup>th</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Paper Writing Skills on Tuesday</li> <li>• Individual Thesis Consultations on Thursday</li> </ul> <p> <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What is a Thesis Statement?” PDF</li> <li>• “Write A Strong Thesis Statement!” PDF</li> <li>• “Film Analysis Writing” PDF</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 10</b></p>	<p><b>Science Fiction as Family Future, pt. 1</b>  <b>October 29<sup>th</sup> &amp; 31<sup>st</sup></b></p> <p> <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Generic Interventions: Tropes and Topicality in the Films of Bong Joon-ho” by Anthony Carew (2017)</li> <li>• “Piggy in the Middle” by Tony Rayns (2017)</li> <li>• “Science Fiction” entry in the <i>Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies</i></li> </ul> <p> <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Okja</i> (2017, 120 min.)</li> </ul>



<p><b>Week 11</b></p>	<p><b>Science Fiction as Family Future, pt. 2</b>  <b>November 5<sup>th</sup> &amp; 7<sup>th</sup></b></p> <p> <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “An Exploration of the Genre of Korean Space Science Fiction Movies — Taking the Movie <i>Space Sweepers</i> as an Example” Jiaoran Han (2024)</li> <li>• “Envisioning a Transnational Future in <i>Space Sweepers</i>” by Hye Jean Chung (2022)</li> </ul> <p> <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Space Sweepers</i> (2021, 136 min.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 12</b></p>	<p><b>Science Fiction as Family Future, p. 3</b>  <b>November 12<sup>th</sup> &amp; 14<sup>th</sup></b></p> <p> <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Posthumanism” in <i>The Oxford Handbook of New Science Fiction Cinemas</i> (2023)</li> <li>• “The Asian Family in Posthuman Cinema: An Exploration of <i>After Yang</i>” by Anik Sarkar (2024)</li> </ul> <p> <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Jung-E</i> (2023, 99 min.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 13</b></p>	<p> <b>Paper Draft #2 Due</b>  <b>November 19<sup>th</sup> &amp; 21<sup>st</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Thesis Consultations on Tuesday</li> <li>• Peer Review Workshop on Thursday</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 14</b></p>	<p><b>A Social Zombie Apocalypse, pt. 1</b>  <b>November 26<sup>th</sup> and Thanksgiving</b></p> <p> <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<i>Train to Busan</i>: Glocalization, Korean Zombies, and a Man-made Neoliberal Disaster” by Keith Wagner (2019)</li> </ul>

	<p>📺 <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Train to Busan</i> (2016, 118 min.)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 15</b>	<p><b>A Social Zombie Apocalypse, pt. 2</b> <b>December 3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 5<sup>th</sup></b></p> <p>📖 <u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Feverish Homeless Cannibal” by George Pfau (2013)</li> <li>• “Zombie Apocalypse and the Crisis of Global Capitalism: Class, Precarious Work, and Environment” by Khorapin Phuaphansawat (2023)</li> </ul> <p>📺 <u>Media:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Seoul Station</i> (2016, 92 min.)</li> </ul>

## Final Paper

**Due December 13<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 p.m.**

## Exam Week

### Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university’s mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

## **Regarding AI**

This course aims to develop creative, analytical, and critical thinking skills. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for your future coursework and for a competitive workplace after you graduate. Therefore, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually. You may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of your assignments. Therefore, using AI-generated content is prohibited in this course and will be considered plagiarism.

If you use AI to help you brainstorm or format for your papers before you write the final version, you must cite the usage of AI-generated and provide the prompts used throughout your writing process. As previously stated, no actual content itself should be turned in that was written by AI, and using an AI tool to modify your content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

## **Course Content Distribution and Recordings Policies**

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).