



## 2025-2026 Korea University International Winter Campus (KU IWC)

*Join our winter, cherish your winter*  
December 23 (Tue), 2025 - January 9 (Fri), 2026

### IWC 117 – Introduction to Korean Studies

#### I . Instructor

Professor	Thomas Ryan
E-mail	thomasryan@korea.ac.kr
Home Institution	Korea University
Class Time	09:00 – 11:55 AM (KST)
Office Hours	By appointment (122 West Hall )
Class Format	In-person
Academic Field	History and Cultural Studies

#### II . Textbook

Required readings (uploaded as PDFs)	<p>Karatani Kojin and Kim Uchang, “Conversation on East Asian Civilization, Past and Present” (2013), <i>Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture</i> 7 (2014): 165-191.</p> <p>Theodore Hughes, “Korean Literature across Colonial Modernity and Cold War,” <i>PMLA</i> 126.3 (2011): 672-677.</p> <p>Yi Kwangsu, “What is Literature” (1916), in <i>Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture</i> 4 (2011): 293-313.</p> <p>Pak T’aewŏn, “The Barbershop Boy” (1936), in Chong-un Kim and Bruce Fulton, ed., <i>A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction</i> (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 161-171.</p> <p>Pak Chiwŏn (1737-1805), “Tale of Master Yedŏk” and “On Names,” in Michael J. Pettid, eds., <i>Premodern Korean Literary Prose: An Anthology</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 185-194.</p> <p>Daniel Y. Kim, “Hardly Emotion: The Minor Feelings of US Empire and the Translational Poetics of Don Mee Choi,” <i>American Quarterly</i> 74.3 (2022): 665-688.</p> <p>Kim Hun, “As I Boil Ramyŏn” (2015), in <i>Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture</i> 13 (2020): 123-135.</p> <p>Lee Hye Ryoung, “The Transnational Imagination and Historical Geography of 21st Century Korean Novels,” <i>Korea Journal</i> 47.1 (2007): 50-78.</p>
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	<p>Han Kang, "The Fruit of My Woman" (1997), <i>Granta</i>: <a href="https://granta.com/the-fruit-of-my-woman/">https://granta.com/the-fruit-of-my-woman/</a></p> <p>John Lie, "What is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity," <i>Korea Observer</i> (2013): 339-363.</p>
<p>Supplemental (in-class) readings</p>	<p>Yi Kwangsu, "The Value of Literature" (1910), in <i>Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture</i> 4 (2011): 287-291.</p> <p>Yi Sang, "Tokyo" (1939), <i>Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture</i> 5 (2012): 339-344.</p> <p>Pak Chiwŏn, "Tale of a Yangban," in Chung Chong-Wha, ed., <i>Korean Classical Literature</i> (London: Routledge, 1989): 38-42.</p> <p>H. D. Harootunian and Masao Miyoshi, "The "Afterlife" of Area Studies," in <i>Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies</i> (London: Duke University Press, 2002), 1-9.</p> <p>Don Mee Choi, <i>Hardly War</i> selections, <i>Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture</i> 16 (2023): 169-181.</p> <p>Jin-kyung Lee, "Visualizing and Invisibilizing the Subempire: Labor, Humanitarianism, and Popular Culture across South Korea and Southeast and South Asia," <i>Journal of Korean Studies</i> 23.1 (2018): 95-109.</p> <p>Jenny Wang Medina, "Global Korea and World Literature," in Heekyoung Cho, ed., <i>The Routledge Companion to Korean Literature</i> (New York: Routledge, 2022): 516-527.</p> <p>Joanna Elfving-Hwang, "Imagined Authenticity: The Somatic Semiotics of Global "Koreanness"," <i>Mechademia</i> 17.1 (2024): 52-61.</p> <p><b>In-class screenings:</b></p> <p><i>Springtime on the Korean Peninsula</i> (dir. Lee Byung-il, 1941).</p> <p>"Jeong Kwan," <i>Chef's Table</i> S3 E1 (2017).</p> <p><i>Decision to Leave</i> (dir. Park Chan-wook, 2022).</p>

### III. Course Description and Objectives (1 course = 3 credits)

This course is a critical introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Korean Studies, understood as a branch of area studies. The course proposes that thinking seriously about Korean Studies requires a consideration of not only Korean culture (expressed through literature, film, art, and music) but also the historical and institutional conditions that have made it possible to think of Korea as a distinct object of knowledge and study. These conditions, the course will suggest, are closely tied to colonialism, post-colonialism, and globalization.

The course is organized around a set of daily reading materials, most of which students must read prior to a given session (shorter reading excerpts will be read together in class and don't need to be read the day before). It is critical that students complete daily reading assignments before the corresponding session, as our discussion will proceed on the assumption that you have become familiar with the readings (*usually* 20 pages or less). *Every second day* will begin with a 10-15 minute free writing response to the assigned text, which must be completed with a pen and paper. The course will culminate in an in-class final exam on Jan. 9 (Friday).

Apart from daily in-class writing responses and the final exam, students will be expected to attend every session and participate meaningfully, whether through vocal participation or active listening; simply asking questions is a perfectly acceptable form of participation. In class discussion you will also be evaluated for your professionalism, meaning your ability to pay attention and treat the instructor and your classmates with respect; this means no scrolling on your phones, no wearing AirPods, no sleeping, no snacking, etc.

Students will be organized into small groups of 4-5 during our first meeting, when they will also sign up to do one group presentation on a daily topic of their choice. Instead of a midterm, finally, there will be a group discussion forum on Jan. 2 (Friday), when student groups will prepare notes and questions reviewing the course material up to that point.

### IV. Grading

Attendance and participation	20%
Professionalism	10%
Writing exercises (every other day)  These in-class writing assignments ask to you reflect freely and briefly (for 10-15 minutes) on your experience with the assigned reading for that day. While there is no "correct" way to write these responses, you should provide some sign that you have read and thought about the assigned text.	20%
Group-based discussion forum (Jan. 2)  In your assigned groups, you will review the material discussed to this point in the class and identify five critical points of continuity and five critical questions for discussion. This will take up the first half of the class for Jan. 2, and will function as a forum for open discussion and review.	15%
Group presentation on assigned daily topic	15%

Each of the daily sessions corresponds to a specific topic in Korean Studies (e.g. the Korean War, colonialism, premodern thought, food); students will choose presentation days during the first meeting (Dec. 23). Your presentations should provide additional context for the assigned reading, introduce some key observations from the text, and introduce at least five questions for discussion.	
Final exam  The final exam will take up the first half of the final session (Jan. 9), 9:00-10:15 (75 minutes). The exam will ask you to complete 4 paragraph-length analyses of relevant terms from the daily sessions (selected from 6 options) and a short essay-length response reflecting on a central theme in the course (selected from 2 options).	20%

**IWC Grading Scale:** A+ (95-100), A (90-94), B+ (85-89), B (80-84), C+ (75-79), C (70-74), D+ (65-69), D (60-64), F (0-59).

## V. Class Outline

Date	Topic	Chapter	Remarks
Dec 23 (Tue)	Orientation Day / Classes start: What is Korean Studies?	No assigned readings	
Dec 24 (Wed)	Korea in East Asian Civilization	<b>Required:</b> Karatani Kojin and Kim Uchang, "Conversation on East Asian Civilization, Past and Present" (2013)	* in-class writing response
<b>Dec 25 (Thu)</b>	<b>No class</b>		
Dec 26 (Fri)	The "big picture" of Korean Studies: Concepts and networks	<b>Required:</b> Hughes, "Korean Literature across Colonial Modernity and Cold War" (2011)	
Dec 29 (Mon)	National and world literature in an imperial age	<b>Required:</b> Yi Kwangsu, "What is Literature" (1916)  <b>In-class supplemental reading:</b> Yi Kwangsu, "The Value of Literature" (1910).	* in-class writing response

Dec 30 (Tue)	Colonial modernity and modernism	<p><b>Required:</b> Pak T'aewŏn, "The Barbershop Boy" (1936)</p> <p><b>In-class supplemental reading:</b> Yi Sang, "Tokyo" (1939)</p> <p>In-class film screening: Springtime on the Korean Peninsula (dir. Lee Byung-il, 1941).</p>	
Dec 31 (Wed)	Premodern or traditional literature and thought	<p><b>Required:</b> Pak Chiwŏn (1737-1805), "Tale of Master Yedŏk" and "On Names"</p> <p><b>In-class supplemental reading:</b> Pak Chiwŏn, "Tale of a Yangban"</p>	* in-class writing response
Jan 1 (Thu)	No class		
Jan 2 (Fri)	The postcolonial era and the concept of "area"	<p><b>No required readings</b></p> <p><b>In-class supplemental reading:</b> Harootunian and Miyoshi, "The "Afterlife" of Area Studies," (2002), 1-9.</p>	<p><b>Group-based discussion forum:</b> Tradition and modernity in Korean Studies</p>
Jan 3 (Sat)	War, race, identity	<p><b>Required:</b> Kim, "Hardly Emotion" (2022)</p> <p><b>In-class supplemental reading:</b> Don Mee Choi, <i>Hardly War</i> (2016) selections</p>	* In-class writing response
Jan 5 (Mon)	Food, culture, taste	<p><b>Required:</b> Kim Hun, "As I Boil Ramyŏn" (2015).</p>	

		<b>In-class screening:</b> "Jeong Kwan," Chef's Table S3 E1 (2017).	
Jan 6 (Tue)	Korea beyond and within borders	<b>Required:</b> Lee, "The Transnational Imagination and Historical Geography of 21st Century Korean Novels" (2007). <b>In-class supplemental reading:</b> Jin-kyung Lee, "Visualizing and Invisibilizing the Subempire" (2018)	* in-class writing response
Jan 7 (Wed)	Korea as world literature and cinema	<b>Required:</b> Han Kang, "The Fruit of My Woman" (1997) <b>In-class supplemental reading:</b> Medina, "Global Korea and World Literature," (2022). <b>In-class screening:</b> <i>Decision to Leave</i> (dir. Park Chan-wook, 2022).	
Jan 8 (Thu)	K-World	<b>Required:</b> Lie, "What is the K in K-pop?" (2013). <b>In-class supplemental reading:</b> Elfving-Hwang, "Imagined	* in-class writing response

		Authenticity" (2024)	
Jan 9 (Fri)	Final exam and wrap-up discussion		Exam: 9:00- 10:15; wrap-up discussion: 10:30- 11:55