

Summer 2024
 Sogang University
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K-pop and Cultural Studies

Course Description

K-pop, short for (South) Korean popular music, has gained immense popularity worldwide, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural barriers. Intersected with other cultural forms, such as fashion, film, digital media, food, and even cosmetic surgeries, K-pop has become a phenomenon with social, cultural, and economic ramifications that are not limited to the 'music scene.' Through the lens of cultural studies, this course approaches K-Pop as a complex site that requests an in-depth examination of globalization, media convergence, representation, identity formation, and more. Some of the questions that will be addressed, but are not limited to, are: In what ways does K-pop serve as a form of soft power for South Korea in the global arena? How did the country's political and economic transformations influence the emergence and evolution of K-pop? How do K-pop fandoms engage with and resist dominant media narratives about K-pop and its artists? What forms of fan pilgrimage are available? How are gender norms and representations constructed and negotiated in K-pop music videos and performances? How do Korean (and non-Korean) diaspora communities engage with K-Pop in constructing their sense of belonging and cultural identity?

The class combines lecture and discussion. Your active participation is vital to the overall learning experience.

Note: The schedule and other details of the course design (e.g., course requirements) are subject to change. The full version of the updated syllabus will be available on the first day of class.

Course Objectives

If you listen carefully to lectures, read the assigned texts thoughtfully, and take an active part in discussions and assignments, you can expect to:

- (1) be familiarized with the historical contexts that have shaped the development of K-Pop
- (2) understand the complex relationship between the K-pop entertainment companies, artists, and fandoms in shaping the K-pop landscape and media practices in contemporary global culture
- (3) analytically evaluate the representation of sex/gender, race, ethnicity, or sexuality in K-Pop music videos, lyrics, and performances
- (4) critically reflect on the implications of K-Pop's global expansion on issues including cultural imperialism, cultural appropriation, and diasporic experience.

Texts

The readings required for the course will consist of excerpts from (or full texts of) book chapters and academic articles as well as general audience-oriented materials (e.g., film, podcast, newspaper articles, or YouTube content). All the texts (except film) will be available on the course website.

Evaluation

Your final grades will be based on your performance across the following assignments:

Attendance/participation	15%
Group discussion	25%
Essays	35%
Presentation & discussion	25%

Total:	100%

All the assignments will receive points rather than letter grades, but you will be informed of the approximate grade translation. The grading scale is as follows:

99-97 A+	89-87 B+	79-77 C+	69-67 D+
96-93 A Excellent	86-83 B Good	76-73 C Adequate	66-63 D Unsatisfactory
92-90 A-	82-80 B-	72-70 C-	62-60 D-

No extra credit will be available for this course.

Course Policies

Availability of modifications: If you have a disability or experience the impact of any form of learning differences, don't hesitate to contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure you receive the most reasonable accommodation based on your needs, please meet with me as early as possible in the semester (preferably within the first week of the course).

Your responsibilities: This syllabus details the specific expectations of the course. You have a responsibility to help create a classroom environment where all may learn. At the most basic level, you will respect the other class members and treat them with the courtesy you hope to receive in return. Specifically, racist, sexist, homophobic, or other discriminatory language or behavior will not be tolerated.

Attendance: Regular attendance is a precondition. You are expected to attend all classes regularly and on time. Attendance will be recorded. Three late arrivals/early departures = 1 absence. Attendance check starts from the first day of class. Five absences will result in an FA for the course.

You are responsible for providing written evidence for any absences you wish to be excused. If you miss class, you need to make sure to cover what you missed. Fellow students and I may help with this, but the course website or email announcements should be the first place to check.

Participation: I will use two criteria to grade your participation: contribution and attentiveness. Disruptive chatter and an unwillingness to accomplish in-class activities will hurt your participation grade. Note: Active participants will be sensitive, reflexive, and respectful of their fellow students. To foster an effective learning environment, we must all agree to listen, respect each other, and open ourselves to the viewpoints of those around us.

Academic integrity: Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to: proxy attendance, cheating on an exam (e.g., copying others' answers or providing information to others), or plagiarism (e.g., taking material from readings without citation, copying another student's paper, or resubmitting the paper you wrote for another class). Using artificial intelligence (like ChatGPT or similar tools) to produce an assignment without permission is prohibited. Failure to maintain academic integrity on an assignment will result in a loss of credit for that assignment—at a minimum. Other penalties may also apply.

Recording/photographing of lectures: No recording/photographing of lectures is allowed unless you provided me with a doctor's note about its need and were given my permission. Violation of the policy will result in a loss of course credit—at a minimum. Other penalties may also apply.

Use of electronic devices: Electronic devices such as laptop computers, iPads, or smartphones can be helpful learning tools in the right circumstances. In other circumstances, they can be a source of annoyance. Use your electronic device solely for class-related activities (e.g., taking notes or looking up words in the dictionary). Type on the keyboard quietly or use a cover film to reduce noise. No random Internet searching is allowed. The rule is quite simple: have courtesy for others in the classroom. If you are found to use any electronic device for non-class-related activities, it will be reflected in your participation evaluation.

Email: Regular access to the Internet constitutes part of the course requirements. I may email announcements (e.g., reading assignment changes). The best way to communicate with me is to email me.

Religious observance: If you have a religious obligation that conflicts with a particular date of session attendance or an assignment deadline, please notify me at least two weeks before the date so that I may consider possible solutions to the conflict.

Schedule

The schedule is subject to change and adjustment, including readings being added or deleted. All changes will be announced in class or by email. You will be responsible for all such announcements if you miss class.

1	Introduction to the Course
2	A Brief History of 'K-pop': Globalization and Soft Power
3	Making the K-pop Industry and Artists
4	K-pop Fandom Culture
5	Music Videos and Liveness
6	Representation 1: Stereotyping and Orientalism
7	Representation 2: Fetishism and More
8	Racism and Colorism in K-pop
9	Cultural Appreciation or Appropriation?
10	K-pop Idols and Labor
11	K-pop and Netflix
12	K-pop 'Sites' and Tourism
13	K-food Goes Viral: Food and Diaspora
14	Presentation
15	Presentation
16	Presentation: And wrap-up