

Course TITLE: Korean Cinema in Dialogue with World Cinema.

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Title/Position : Professor

Institution : Dongseo University



Course Overview:

While Korea has a history of being the hermit kingdom, the films of Korea stand as a lasting dialogue Korea has been having with foreign cinemas since its' inception under Japanese occupation. This course will look at the history of film in Korea and the ways in which modern Korean cinema has influenced and been influenced by various cinematic movements from around the world. **This course will feature interviews and discussions with industry professionals teaching at the Im Kwon-Taek College of Media Arts.

Full Description:

Recognizing that while national cinema histories are oftentimes self-reflecting in terms of culture, their places within the zeitgeist of art and film rely on outside influences and exchanges of techniques, structures, mise-en-scene, and approaches to the medium itself. At the end of the course, students will have a solid historical understanding of film and the ways in which international narrative and stylistic methods have been adopted and/or altered by Korean filmmakers.

Class 1: Kino Dramas and the Pre-War Japanese Occupation.

Description: Out of occupation and oppression, early Korean film blossomed and bloomed in a culture thirsting for their independence. Korean film making industry dates to 1919 during the Japanese occupation. And despite colonial restrictions placed on Korean made films, by 1935 many films reflected images and ideas of national liberation and strong connections to a shared Korean identity. Despite the best efforts of the Japanese occupation to erase what it means to be Korean, filmmaking endured as a liberating force.

Class 2: Post-War Golden Age cinema through the Depression.

Description: After the war, movies became an important source for public entertainment. The first big hit of this time was Chunhyang-jon, an unprecedented success, in two months in Seoul it drew over 200,000 viewers (10% of Seoul's population). This encouraged other films to be made and greatly boosted the revival of the film industry. The first president of Korea, Dr. Lee Seung-man had a particular fondness for film and enacted a tax exemption measure to encourage the development of the domestic filmmaking industry. Reflecting the political, social, and economic instability that followed the two wars Korean film showed the discord between generations and the suffering of the people. Most often the genre chosen was the melodrama or comedy used to great effect by Yu Hyon-mok, Sin Sang-ok, and Kim Gi-yong.

Class 3: The Housemaid 1960 vs. The Housemaid 2010 : 50 years of Transition.

Description: This film, made only seven years after the end of The Korean War, is a milestone in post-war South Korean cinema. Kim Ki-Young remade this film under the title Woman of Fire in 1971 and again in 1982. Director Im Sang-soo made another remake, a looser adaptation also titled The Housemaid, in 2010. Close analysis demonstrates the evolution of Korean film from generation to generation.

Class 4: Local Productions, Foreign Films, and the Chaebols.

Description: The military coup of May of 1961 changed Korean filmmaking abruptly generating the "Motion Picture Law," which restructured the entire industry. The laws actually limited the number of production companies to 16, there had been 71 in operation at the time and established a quota system for the production and importing of films. In 1973 the "Revitalizing Government" was formed and the Motion Picture Law was revised. Each year the amount of film issued was strictly controlled and every production company registered with the government had to make a specified number of movies. Each film had to reflect the ideology of the Revitalizing Government. To increase the profitability in the distribution and screening of movies, the government strictly limited the number of foreign films that could be imported and the number of days they could be shown in a year.

Class 5: Shiri and the Hong Kong Blueprint.

Description: As the 1980's progressed into the 1990's Korean film could criticize both the government and culture more freely. More film professionals continued to emerge and demanded more change in government policy to allow even more freedom in the Korean film industry. Just when the hong kong film industry began to fall out of favor; Korean film comes in to fill the vacuum for Asian movie-goers looking for thrills and chills.

Class 6: Korean Renaissance: Lee Chang-Dong, Im Kwon-Taek.

Description: Two visionary men who tell stories that deal with the lives of modern Koreans, making films that take a long look at the lives of Korean in their cultural element with an ear toward history. Artistic while remaining accessible, they signify a shift in Korean cinema toward a more sophisticated sensibility.

Class 7: Second Wave Directors: Kim Ki-Duk, Park Chan-Wook

Description: The early 2000's saw the rise of a new kind of storyteller. Universal themes with a distinctly Korean flavor. Visually building upon and simultaneously incorporating elements from their Korean predecessors and the influence of the festival scene, Kim Ki-Duk and Park Chan-Wook solidified Korean film on the world stage and influenced a new generation of Korean directors.

Interview:

Class 8: Genre Focus: Tensions on the Korean Peninsula: Korean War Films.

Description: Officially at war for more than 60 years, South Korea deals with the trauma of the past and constant threat of conflict through their cinema. Drama, thriller, action, horror, comedy, and romance have all been used to share the heartbreak, triumph, and passion of war. Both enemy and brother, the threat of the North Korea conflict in South Korean cinema echoes stories of a country divided and a cinematic consciousness of a people at war with themselves.

Interview:

Class 9: Korean's Abroad: Actors and Directors Find Success in Hollywood

Description: Kim Jee-Woon, Bong Joon-Ho, and Park Chan-Wook tested their mettle by signing on to make films in Hollywood. Certainly a different continent and audience will yield unexpected and mixed results, but looking at their Hollywood films as cultural artifacts and exercises in experimentation, we can see the ways these directors view and understand hollywood conventions.

Class 10: Before and After Oldboy: Copy-Cat Cinema.

Description: Few Korean films have gained the notoriety or international viewership as Park Chan-Wook's 2003 film *Oldboy*. This class will focus on the ways in which the film has been received abroad and irrevocably changed Korean cinema for the better or worse. How has the *Oldboy* aesthetic been adopted by droves of Korean filmmakers and perhaps stalled the development of the "Korean New Wave" and subsequent generations?

Interview:

Class 11: Based on a true story: Case Study: Memories of a Murder.

Description: True crime fictionalizations allow societies to come to grips with tragedy and sensationalization. Korea is no different, however the focus of these films is culturally significant and unique to Korean Cinema. Dissolution of family, rural-phobia, and criminals becoming heroes are all themes that demonstrate larger societal concerns that find their way into this under discussed genre.

Class 12: Korean Horror: Nods to Dario Argento and Stanley Kubrick.

Description: Borrowing from the likes of Kubrick and Argento, Korean horror films often push cheap jump-scares aside in favor of a more atmospheric and cerebral kind of horror. Though they often deal with themes lost on non-asian audiences, Korean horror films are not so dissimilar from their foreign counterparts, conservative agenda and all.

Class 13: Kimchi Westerns and Better Tomorrows: Global Genres.

Description: How do you take an iconic American genre and make it flawlessly blend with pre-war Manchuria? How do you reimagine a John Woo, guns-blazing-no-need-to-reload,arms-trafficking, gangster film in contemporary Korea? Korean film has a history of adopting global genres and assimilating conventions.

Class 14: Alternative Voices: Kim So-Yong, Hong Sang Soo

Description: Not all Korean films are wanna-be blockbusters and highly-financed love stories or action dramas. Korean directors Kim So-Yong and Hong Sang Soo are among a group of filmmakers offering more subtle and critical visions of contemporary Korea. Isolation, family-drift, diaspora, sexual abuse, and redemption don't need to be mainstream.

Class 15: The Future of Korean Film: Art and Business

Description: Are Korean directors such as Yeon Sang Ho (*Train to Busan*) and Na Hong-Jin (*The Wailing 2016, Chaser 2008*) the future of Korean Cinema? Or does the future rely on dissenting voices and telling of stories in unconventional or technologically new ways. Somewhere between style and technique, the future of Korean cinema seems bright.

Grading:

Midterm essay - 40%

Final essay - 40%

Attendance - 10%

Participation - 10%