

Program in Transnational Korean Studies *Presents:*

My Car Modernity: What the U.S. Army brought to South Korean cinematic imagination about modernization



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4:30-6pm

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This presentation examines the cultural logic of mobilization in postcolonial South Korea, which could be called ‘*my car* modernity,’ promoted through American cinematic representations.

Since early 1946, the U.S. Army Military Government In Korea removed the restriction imposed by the Japanese colonial administration regarding Hollywood films and started importing U.S. Army and U.S. Information Service propaganda films. These audiovisual textbooks for ‘free people’ praised the popularization of private ownership in transportation and attracted audiences with scenes of expressways and privately-owned cars. This might have encouraged audiences to imagine a self-regulating and untrammled unit where they could choose their own destination, speed, and companions, symbolized in the ideal type of car-owning nuclear family.

South Korean mass media began using the Korean transliteration of English words, *maik’a* [my car], as a coinage to call a privately owned car as early as the late 1960s. Such representational expressions of ‘my car’ were closely linked with the global transition after WWII, such as the nuclearization of the family, the rise of the automobile industry, and the emergence of small screens at home. These show how South Koreans were exposed to a new, liberal technology of government under U.S. hegemony, after the cessation of the Japanese colonial rule characterizing ‘locomotive’ modernity.