

Program in Transnational Korean Studies

Presents:

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4:00 – 6:00pm
Galbraith Room, HSS 4025

Asia, Imitation, and the Korean Wave

The recent visibility of South Korea through hallyu, or the Korean Wave resembles the path to international recognition taken by other Asian nations via mediated soft culture: manga and anime in Japan, martial arts and action movies in Hong Kong, and Bollywood films in India to name a few examples. Hallyu is exceptional, however, in the multiple forms of cultural products that it promotes, from movies, music, and television dramas to beauty products, cosmetic surgery, fashion, and food; the affective and aesthetic synergies connecting these export products as a form of nation branding; and the unabashed ways in which they recombine styles and narratives from other times and places, with a difference.

This talk brings together strands of my research on the globalization of Korean culture through transnational flows of images, iconography and narratives in popular media. I am interested in how the metaphorical face of the nation, the literal bodies of stars, and the textual bodies of narratives are made over to appeal to local, regional, and global audiences. In what ways, if any, are these remakes transforming more traditional notions of South Korea specifically and East Asia generally on the world stage? I approach this question by focusing on the trope of imitation, drawing on and rethinking techno-orientalist stereotypes of Asia and Asians as imitative to consider the different forms of inauthenticity that permeate cultural discourse on the Korean Wave.