

Course Description: “Turn your eyes toward the world while having your feet grounded in your homeland!” Introduced in 2009 and prominently displayed on public squares, above factory entrances, and in school hallways throughout North Korea, this slogan captures the aspirations and paradoxes North Korea faces in the twenty-first century. In a country where smugglers of foreign media can still face public execution, how do North Korean citizens actually gain knowledge of the world—especially millennials, who are more likely to adopt new technology and whose lives are most acutely impacted by the changing media landscape? And what role does the state play?

This seminar explores the contradictory ways the state and the people use cell phones with very different objectives in mind. The expansion of forbidden media products brokers significant changes in today’s North Korea, where the millennial generation plays a crucial role in exposing the increasing tension between the state and the people, between the premillennial generation who lived under the state’s centralized governance and millennials who have been relatively free from it, and between the thriving marketers and those left out of the growing marketplace economy. Exploring the tensions between millennial North Korea and North Korean millennials leads to a more nuanced understanding of a fractured and fragmented society that has been largely perceived by the outside world as an unchanging, monolithic entity.

Reading:

- Fahy, Sandra. “Hallyu in the South, Hunger in the North: Alternative Imaginings of What Life Could Be.” In *South Korean Popular Culture and North Korea*, ed. Youna Kim. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Kim, Yonho. *Cell Phones in North Korea: Has North Korea Entered the Telecommunications Revolution?* Washington, DC: US-Korea Institute and Voice of America, 2014.
- Kim, Suk-Young. “For the Eyes of North Koreans? Politics of Money and Class in *Boys Over Flowers*.” In *The Korean Wave: Korean Media Go Global*, ed. Youna Kim. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Kretchun, Nat, and Jane Kim. *A Quiet Opening: North Koreans in a Changing Media Environment*. Washington, DC: InterMedia, 2012.

Recommended reading:

- Kim, Suk-Young. Illusive Utopia: Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

- Puchner, Martin. The Language of Thieves. Norton, 2020.