



STS 325 From Tokyo to Taipei: K-Pop and East Asian Culture

Designed and instructed by: Chia-ying Shih

E-mail: cs772@njit.edu

Office Hour: 1:00-3:00 pm on Monday

Location: CULM 435 B

A. Course Information

Class Duration: 11:30 AM-12:50 PM on Monday & Wednesday

Classroom: ECEC 100

Notes:

1. Please download supplementary materials, lecture notes, assignments, and other resources from the course webpage. Be sure to check for course-related announcements regularly.
2. This course is open to all students without any prerequisite knowledge of Chinese language or culture. All lectures, readings, and discussion are conducted in English.

B. Course Description

This course offers a critical exploration of issues of globalization, soft power, and transnational cultural exchange through the lens of popular culture across East Asia, with a focus on Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Through the study of cultural products such as anime, comics, pop music, drama, and film, students will examine the cultural, industrial, and political forces shaping regional and global media distribution and think critically about how these cultural forms are produced, consumed, and adapted both within and outside East Asia.

C. Course Objectives: From Entertainment to Ideology: Understanding the Multiple Dimensions of East Asian

Popular Culture

By the end of this course, students will:

- **Develop cultural analysis skills:** Understand how different cultural texts (e.g., anime, K-dramas, idol industries) reflect social values, identity politics, and historical memory.
- **Adopt a comparative perspective:** Compare the production and dissemination strategies across Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong, and examine each region's role in the East Asian and global cultural markets.
- **Grasp the dynamics of globalization and localization:** Analyze how East Asian cultures operate on the global stage while retaining local cultural features to resonate with diverse audiences.
- **Enhance critical thinking:** Critically engage with issues such as fandom, censorship, commodification, and political manipulation, reflecting on how popular culture can both unite and divide.
- **Explore the intersection of culture and politics:** Use the final theme—popular culture as a political tool—as a lens to reflect on how creative production can function as an exercise of soft power and cultural diplomacy.

Ultimately, this course encourages students to reflect critically and openly on their everyday cultural experiences and to consider their own roles within the global flows of East Asian popular culture.

D. Course Materials

1. **Media Clips:** In-class viewing materials such as music videos, drama clips, interviews, news segments, etc.

2. **Other Online Resources:** Includes fan forums, social media screenshots, online articles, and resources for further exploration.
3. **Lecture Slides and Supplementary Materials:** Provided by the instructor.

E. Course Format

The course consists of six main components:

1. Media Viewing and Online Material Analysis
2. Class Discussions
3. Lectures
4. Assignments
5. Quizzes
6. Final Project and Presentation

F. Assignments

There are five **Media/Text Analysis Assignments** throughout the semester. Students select and view assigned media based on the given instructions, share their personal perspectives and reflections, and learn to apply classroom knowledge to analyze and critically

engage with specific popular cultural products.

Assignment Guidelines:

- Word Count: 500–1000 words
- Font: Times New Roman
- Font size: 12 pt
- Spacing: 1.5 lines
- File Format: .doc and .pdf, submit on designated platform
- File Naming Example: Week2_Chiaying Shih_1234567 (Student ID)
- Deadline: By the end of the day before the class time (when the class is on Wednesday, September 17 → submit by previous September 16 at 11:59 p.m.)

Rubric (7 points total):

Evaluation Criteria	Description	Score Range
Content Understanding	Clearly describes media content, grasps core issues and cultural context	0–2 points

Evaluation Criteria	Description	Score Range
Critical Analysis	Addresses assignment questions accurately and relates to course themes	0–2 points
Personal Reflection	Offers sincere personal insight, relates to personal or cultural experience	0–2 points
Timeliness and Format	Submitted on time, meets file and word count requirements	0–1 point

G. Quizzes

There are five quizzes in this semester. Students are required to respond to questions based on the weekly readings, media clips, and course content to ensure familiarity with the material.

H. Final Project Guidelines

Project Goal:

Expanding on the media observation and cultural analysis skills from class, the final project encourages students to explore the circulation, transformation, and reinterpretation of East Asian pop culture through either a comparative or ethnographic lens. This

project emphasizes real-world applications of course content and aims to develop students' research and presentation skills.

Choose One Project Type:

1. Cross-Cultural Comparison

- Compare popular culture products or phenomena from **different regions or different media forms**
 - Examples: The reception of Korean Wave in Japan, differences between Japanese and Korean idol culture, stylistic differences in films from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan
 - Or: A comparison between Korean pop music and Chinese television dramas in terms of narrative structure and fan engagement
- You may focus on a specific genre or cultural aspect, such as idol dramas, anime, fan culture, variety shows, music, etc.
- Use external sources to support your analysis—academic literature, news articles, online discussions, or data are all encouraged
- Emphasize clear argumentation and structured analysis; avoid simply listing observations without interpretation.

2. Mini Ethnography

- Observe fan communities, local audiences, or media platforms through interviews, participation, or online research.

- Examples:
 1. Compare fan behavior of Stray Kids across TikTok, IG, YouTube, X, Threads, etc.
 2. Explore different anime communities and their unique traits.
 3. Examine how international audiences comment on the same media work.
- Focus on **description and reflection**: "What did I see? What are they saying? How does this relate to our class discussion?"

Guidelines:

- Each student must submit:
 - **Oral Presentation** (5 minutes in Week 15)
 - **Written Report** (1,500–2,000 words with simple charts and citations)

Written Report Format:

- File Type: .doc and .pdf
- Word Count: 1,500–2,000 words (excluding appendices and references)
- Suggested Structure:
 1. Introduction and Research Motivation

2. Observation Methods and Phenomenon Description
3. Analysis and Discussion
4. Conclusion
5. References and Appendices (if applicable)

Written Report Grading (65 points total):

Criteria	Description	Weight
Clarity and Focus	Specific and relevant topic with clear research value	20%
Use of Course Theory	Applies course concepts and readings to analysis	20%
Depth and Originality	Thoughtful insights, detailed observations, original work	20%
Format and Citation	Proper formatting and source citation	5%

Oral Presentation Grading (35 points total):

Criterion	Description	Weight
Organization & Delivery	Clear structure, logical flow, effective time management	25%
Preparation & Content Mastery	Well-prepared, confident delivery, strong command of content	10%

Late submission, plagiarism, or absence during presentation will affect your grade.

Timelines

1. September 24 (by 11:59 PM): Decide topic of the final presentation.
2. November 5 (by 11:59 PM): Hand in first draft of the final project.
3. November 17& 19 in the class: First Draft Review
4. December 8& 10 in the class: Student Presentation

H. Student Responsibilities

1. Stay Updated

- Pay attention to both in-class and online announcements.

2. Active Participation

- Participate in discussions and activities to enhance critical thinking, analysis, and public speaking skills.

3. Timely Completion of Assignments

- Submit all work on time.
- Preview weekly materials and discussion questions in advance.

I. Grading

- **Attendance:** 15%
 - Attendance is taken every class. Arriving late for the first session allows for check-in during break, but will be marked as late. Arrivals during the second session count as absent.
- **Media/Text Analysis Assignments:** 35% (5 × 7%)
- **Quizzes:** 25% (5 X 5%)
- **Final Project:** 25%

Notes:

- No late submissions are accepted.
- Academic honesty is strictly enforced. Refer to NJIT's academic integrity policy.

Final Grade Scale:

100-97%=A 4.0	96-94%=A 3.9	93-90%=A- 3.8-3.5	89-87%=B+ 3.4-3.2	86-84%=B 3.1-2.9	83-80%=B- 2.8-2.5	79-77%=C+ 2.4-2.2
76-74%=C 2.1-1.9	73-70%=C- 1.8-1.5	69-67%=D+ 1.4-1.2	66-64%=D 1.1-0.9	63-60%=D- 0.8-0.7	59%--=F 0.0	

J. Course Schedule (Tentative)

Course Introduction – Mapping East Asian Popular Culture

Reading:

Koichi Iwabuchi, “East Asian Popular Culture and Inter-Asian Referencing” (in *Routledge Handbook of East Asian Popular Culture*, 2017)

Quiz 1

Topic 1: Japanese Anime and Visual Culture

Reading:

Marc Steinberg, “Chapter 2: Candies, Premiums, and Character Merchandising: The Meiji–Atomu Marketing Campaign” (in *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*, 2012)

Media/Text Analysis Assignment 1

Topic 2: Japanese Dramas and Films — Narrative, Emotion, and Everyday Culture

Reading:

Koichi Iwabuchi, "Becoming Culturally Proximate: Japanese TV Dramas in Taiwan"" (in *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, 2002)

Quiz 2

Topic 3: The Rise of the Korean Wave

Reading:

Dal Yong Jin, " Critical Discourse of K-pop within Globalization " (in *New Korean Wave*, 2016).

Media/Text Analysis Assignment 2

Topic 4: The K-pop Industry: Trainee System, Idols, and Labor

Reading:

Epstein & Turnbull, "Girls' Generation? Gender, (Dis)empowerment, and K-pop" (in *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, 2014).

Quiz 3

Topic 5: Taiwanese Manhua and Animation: Art, Identity, and Cultural Expression

Reading:

Pingjun Liu, "Decoding the Power Trajectory of Taiwanese Comics Culture" (in *Nanhua Journal of Social Sciences* 11, 2022).

Media/Text Analysis Assignment 3



Topic 6: Taiwanese Dramas and Television Culture

Reading:

Shu-Yueh Lee and Yen-Shen Chen, "The Representation and Myths of Gender and Romance: A Case Study of Leading Characters in Taiwan's Trendy Drama" (In *Chinese Journal of Communication Research*, 2015).

Quiz 4

Topic 7: Chinese Animation and Cultural Influence

Reading:

Brandon Zheng and Steven W. Lewis, "Is China Taking Over the Anime Industry? Definitions and Data"

<https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/china-taking-over-anime-industry-definitions-and-data>

Topic 8: Chinese Dramas and the Global Expansion of Chinese Pop Culture

Media/Text Analysis Assignment 4

Topic 9: China's Cultural Market and State Control

Reading:

Michael Keane , “Disconnecting, Connecting, and Reconnecting: How Chinese Television Found Its Way Out of the Box” (in *International Journal of Communication* 10, 2016)

Quiz 5



Topic 10: The Global Influence of Hong Kong Cinema

Reading:

Stephen Teo, “Bruce Lee: Narcissus and the Little Dragon,” (in *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions*, 1997).

Media/Text Analysis Assignment 5

Topic 11: Transnational Fan Culture and Online Communities

Reading:

C. Lee Harrington and Denise Bielby, "Global Fandom, Global Fan Studies", in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in Mediated World*, 2007.

Topic 12: Pop Culture as a Political Tool

Reading:

Eva Rohrhofer "Media Systems and Political Systems in East Asia" (in *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies*, 2015)

Conclusion: Group Project Presentations and Course Summary

- **Final Project Presentations**

K. Weekly Schedule (Tentative)

WEEK 1	MON 9/1 No Class	TUESDAY	WED 9/3	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
			Course Syllabus				
Quiz							
Assignment							

WEEK 2	MON 9/8	TUESDAY	WED 9/10	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Course Introduction – Mapping East Asian Popular Culture		Course Introduction – Mapping East Asian Popular Culture				
Quiz	Quiz 1						
Assignment			Provide Questions of Assignment 1				

WEEK 3	MON 9/15	TUESDAY	WED 9/17	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 1: Japanese Anime and Visual Culture		Topic 1: Japanese Anime and Visual Culture				
Quiz							
Assignment			Assignment 1 Due				

WEEK 4	MON 9/22	TUESDAY	WED 9/24	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 2: Japanese Dramas and Films — Narrative, Emotion, and Everyday Culture		Topic 2: Japanese Dramas and Films — Narrative, Emotion, and Everyday Culture				
Quiz	Quiz 2						
Assignment			Provide Questions of Assignment 2				
Final Project Timelines			Decide Topic of the Final Project				

WEEK 5	MON 9/29	TUESDAY	WED 10/1	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 3: The Rise of the Korean Wave		Topic 3: The Rise of the Korean Wave				
Quiz							
Assignment			Assignment 2 Due				

WEEK 6	MON 10/6	TUESDAY	WED 10/8	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 4: The K-pop Industry: Trainee System, Idols, and Labor		Topic 4: The K-pop Industry: Trainee System, Idols, and Labor				
Quiz			Quiz 3				
Assignment			Provide Questions of Assignment 3				

WEEK 7	MON 10/13	TUESDAY	WED 10/15	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 5: Taiwanese Manhua and Animation: Art, Identity, and Cultural Expression		Topic 6: Taiwanese Dramas and Television Culture				
Quiz							
Assignment			Assignment 3 Due				

WEEK 8	MON 10/20	TUESDAY	WED 10/22	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 6: Taiwanese Dramas and Television Culture		Topic 7: Chinese Animation and Cultural Influence				
Quiz	Quiz 4						
Assignment			Provide Questions of Assignment 4				

WEEK 9	MON 10/27	TUESDAY	WED 10/29	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 7: Chinese Animation and Cultural Influence		Topic 8: Chinese Dramas and the Global Expansion of Chinese Pop Culture				
Quiz							
Assignment			Assignment 4 Due				

WEEK 10	MON 11/3	TUESDAY	WED 11/5	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 9: China's Cultural Market and State Control		Topic 9: China's Cultural Market and State Control				
Quiz	Quiz 5						
Assignment			Provide Questions of Assignment 5				
Final Project Timelines			Hand in First Draft of the Final Project.				

WEEK 11	MON 11/10	TUESDAY	WED 11/12	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 10: The Global Influence of Hong Kong Cinema		Topic 10: The Global Influence of Hong Kong Cinema				
Quiz							
Assignment			Assignment 5 Due				

WEEK 12	MON 11/17	TUESDAY	WED 11/19	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
Final Project Timelines	First Draft Review		First Draft Review				
Quiz							
Assignment							

WEEK 13	MON 11/24	TUESDAY	WED 11/26 No Class	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 11: Transnational Fan Culture and Online Communities						
Quiz							
Assignment							

WEEK 14	MON 12/1	TUESDAY	WED 12/3	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Topic 11: Transnational Fan Culture and Online Communities		Topic 12: Pop Culture as a Political Tool				
Quiz							
Assignment							

WEEK 15	MON 12/8	TUESDAY	WED 12/10	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
Final Project Timelines	Student Presentation		Student Presentation				
			Conclusion: Project Presentations and Course Summary				
Quiz							
Assignment							

WEEK 16	MON 12/15 Final Exam Week	TUESDAY	WED 12/17 Final Exam Week	THURSDAY	FRI	SAT	SUN
Quiz							
Assignment							