Digital Media in Japan and Korea
Spring 2022 – CMS.351/21G.067/21G.597
Prof. Paul Roquet (he/him)

Course Description
In this course we examine the cultural dimensions of digital media in Japan and South Korea. The class engages with social media, how popular culture moves online, video games and esports, robots, and immersive interfaces. By considering how these media have become woven into new social and aesthetic practices in both countries, we will work towards the comparative study of digital life beyond the US context. There are no language or course prerequisites for CMS.351/21G.067. The Japanese Language Option, 21G.597, includes short additional assignments in Japanese. See Canvas for additional course policies.

Student Responsibilities
• Attendance and engaged participation (20%)
• Post brief reading response by 2pm on days with assigned materials (20%)
• Expanding the Frame (class presentation related to day’s readings, 1x/semester, 10%)
• Project 1: Influencer Report (writeup + 2’ Capsule Video, 15%)
• Project 2: Platform Analysis Group Project (wiki page, presentation, 15%)
• Project 3: JKDM Research Project (proposal, writeup/project + presentation, 20%)

Note: All materials will be made available in digital form via Canvas.

Schedule

Feb 1/T Introduction (What’s Digital Media Anyway?)

Unit 1. BEING ONLINE

Feb 3/Th – Living with the Internet
• Kyong Yoon, “Introduction: Transnational Youth and Digital Media” and “Digital Mediascape of Global Experiences”
• Kimberley Hassel, “Digital Sociality in Covid-19 Japan”

Feb 8/T – Aesthetics of Anonymity
• Shunsuke Nozawa, “The Gross Face and Virtual Fame: Semiotic Mediation in Japanese Virtual Communication”
• Sunyoung Yang, “Networking South Korea: Internet, Nation, and New Subjects”

Feb 10/Th – Influencers & Bots
• Crystal Abidin, et. al. “Influencers and COVID-19: Reviewing Key Issues in Press Coverage across Australia, China, Japan, and South Korea”
• Amy Johnson, “On Manual Bots and Being Human on Twitter”
Feb 15/T – Streaming the Self
- Hyesu Park, “Media, Narrative, and Culture: Narrativizing and Contextualizing Korean Mukbang Shows”
- Daniel Johnson, “Polyphonic/Pseudo-Synchronous: Animated Writing in the Comment Feed of Nicovideo”

Feb 17/Th – The Platform Economy
- Marc Steinberg, “The Platformitization of Regional Chat Apps”
- Dorothea Mladenova, “Platformatization in the Funeral Industry: The Case of Online Funeral Discounters”

Feb 22/T – (Monday schedule - no class)

Feb 24/Th – Internet Activism
- Jiyeon Kang, “Internet Activism Transforming Street Politics: The 2008 ‘Mad Cow’ Candlelight Festivals and New Democratic Sensibilities”
- Jinsook Kim, “Sticky Activism: The Gangnam Station Murder Case and New Feminist Practices against Misogyny and Femicide”

Mar 1/T – Networked Hate
- Ji-Hyun Ahn, “Inter-Asia Media/Cultural Studies in the Era of Hate”
- Jeffrey James Hall, “Japan’s Right-Wing YouTubers: Finding a Niche in an Environment of Increased Censorship”

Mar 3/Th – Screen Influencer Report Videos

Unit 2. PLATFORMS FOR POPULAR CULTURE

Mar 8/T – Anime’s Cultural Flows
- Rayna Denison, “Anime’s Distribution Worlds”
- Kyong Yoon, “Digital Mediascape of the Korean Otaku”

Mar 10/Th – Digitizing Literature
- Satomi Saito, “Narrative in the Digital Age: From Light Novels to Web Serials”
- Brian Yecies, and Ae-Gyung Shim, “Introducing Webtoons and the Expansion of Korea’s Creative Industries”

Mar 15/T – TV on Demand
- Kyong Yoon, “Digital Mediascape of the Korean Wave”

Mar 17/Th – Audiences as Producers
- Dorothy Finan, “Idols You Can Make: The Player as Auteur in Japan’s Media Mix”
- Grace Kweon, School of K-pop: Teaching a Nation Through Idol Survival Programs (Introduction and Conclusion)

<spring break – no class>
Mar 29/T – Do What You Love?
• Gabriella Lukács, “Dreamwork: Cell Phone Novelists, Affective Labor, and Precarity Politics”
• Listen: Allison Alexy and Gabriella Lukács. Michigan Talks Japan S2E4

Mar 31/Th – Meet outside of class to work on group presentations

Apr 5/T – Platform Analysis group presentations 1/2

Apr 7/Th – Platform Analysis group presentations 2/2

Unit 3. VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

Apr 12/T - Console Gaming
• Mia Consalvo, “Much Ado About JRPGs: Square Enix and the Corporate Creation of Videogames”
• Rachael Hutchinson, Introduction to Japanese Culture Through Videogames
• Due: JKDM Research Project proposal

Apr 14/Th – MMORPGs
• Dal Yong Jin, “Digital Hallyu 2.0: Transnationalization of Local Digital Games”
• Steve Choe and Se Young Kim. “Never Stop Playing: StarCraft and Asian Gamer Death”

Apr 19/T – Esports
• Yeomi Choi, Janine S. Slaker, and Nida Ahmad, “Deep Strike: Playing Gender in the World of Overwatch and the Case of Geguri”

Apr 21/Th – AR/VR
• Paul Roquet, “From Animation to Augmentation: Dennō Coil and the Composited Self”
• Jan-Philipp Stein, “Conjuring up the Departed in Virtual Reality: The Good, the Bad, and the Potentially Ugly”

Apr 26/T – Vtubers and Robots
• Stevie Suan, “Performing Virtual YouTubers: Acting Across Borders in the Platform Society”
• Paul Roquet, “The Body Shop”

4/28 Th – Surveillance in the Metaverse
• Kyung Hyun Kim, “Korean Meme-icry: Samsung and K-Pop”
• David Humphrey, “Sensing the Human: Biometric Surveillance and the Japanese Technology Industry”

May 3/T - JKDM Research Project Presentations I

May 5/Th - JKDM Research Project Presentations II

May 10/T - Closing thoughts / themes TBD based on class interests
Course Protocols

- **Attendance:** This is a discussion-centered course, and attendance and participation during our scheduled meeting times is important. Please come to class having read the materials carefully and ready to contribute. If you cannot make it to a meeting or two due to unforeseen events you will not be penalized, but please let me know ahead of time. If you find you are missing classes regularly, please contact me as early as possible to consider the best course of action.

- **Office Hours:** I will have appointments available throughout the day on Friday, which can be scheduled with Calendly [here](https://integrity.mit.edu/). If needed, you can also e-mail me to find an alternate time during the week. This can be anything from a quick question about an assignment, a particular topic you want to know more about or get some recommendations for, something from class you want to discuss further, or really anything else you want to talk about related to the course. Try to stop by at least once or twice during the semester, even if just to check in.

- **Late work:** Getting things in on time will enable you to get the most out of class, contribute the most to the group, and make life easier for me, but I won’t be marking down for lateness this semester given the unusual circumstances. Please contact me as early as possible if you need an extension or are having any trouble with the assignments.

- **Academic Honesty:** Consequences for plagiarism can include zero points for the assignment, failure of the course, and suspension. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism in the context of a particular assignment, or whether a source is reliable, contact me. See [https://integrity.mit.edu/](https://integrity.mit.edu/) for official policy.

- **Additional Feedback on Presentations and Writing:** The Writing and Communication Center offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication experts with advanced degrees and publishing experience. The WCC can help you further develop your oral communication skills and learn about all types of academic and professional writing. You can learn more about WCC consultations at [http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center](http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center) and register with the online scheduler to make remote appointments through [https://mit.mywconline.com](https://mit.mywconline.com). Please note that the WCC hours are offered Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., and fill up fast.

- **Students with Disabilities:** Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with MIT Student Disabilities Services.

- **Mental Health:** As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may impact your ability to attend class, concentrate, complete work, take an exam, or participate in daily activities. For undergraduates, the best initial resource for help is Student Support Services (S3) in 5-104 or at (617) 253-4861.

- **Classroom Climate:** I aim to foster a sense of community in this classroom where everyone is treated with respect. The course is intended to be welcoming to individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, genders, sexualities, religious and political affiliations – and other perceptible and imperceptible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. If you find this standard is not being upheld, please contact me.