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Korean Studies Institute



KSI eNewsletter, Fall 2026

Dear All,

I hope you had a relaxing summer. As we start a new academic year, the Korean Studies Institute at USC (KSI) would like to welcome everyone back. Our faculty, staff, and students have prepared an exciting lineup of academic and cultural events this fall.

A few major archive- and research-focused events will be at the core of our activities this semester. We begin in September with the Mutual Gaze: Grassroots Encounters and the Foundations of a Living Korea-U.S. Alliance conference on the history of U.S. Peace Corps in South Korea (1966-1981). The event is co-organized with the Korean Heritage Library in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the Peace Corps in South Korea. We continue in October with the inaugural Pacific Graduate Conference in Korean Studies at USC (PaCKS), which will take place over two days and showcases the latest research by emerging scholars in our field. Later in October will be the time for the Korean and Korean American Studies Conference on teaching Korean language, culture and history in the United States. The conference will bring to campus over a hundred Korean and Korean American studies scholars and K-12 educators of Korean language and contents.

Adding to the above gatherings will be several speaker events, including a guest lecture by Professor Peng Xu on premodern literary exchanges between China and Korea, Dr. Juwon Kim's talk on politics and race in modern East Asia, and Dr. Ahn Hyochun's discussion of South Korea's rise as a hi-tech military power on the global scene.

There are then events that will center on our community on and off the USC campus. These include a celebration of Korean culture through the Hangeul Day Festival in early October; the K-Woolim Speech Competition in late October; and a return of our popular K-Trail guided walk in November, offering an appreciation of the historical Korean presence at USC and in the surrounding area. Also this fall, the KSI congratulates the Korean Heritage Library (KHL) on its 40th anniversary. The library was founded in 1986 with support from the Korean American community, the South Korean government, and from individual and corporate donors. The KHL was a member of the Korean

Collections Consortium of North America (KCCNA) from its foundation in 1994 through 2024, and in that function it contributed importantly to the development of Korean studies archives in North America. In collaboration with librarian Jungeun Hong, the KSI will hold a celebratory symposium in Doheny Library on September 25th, featuring testimonials by some of the individuals who contributed to KHL right from its start.

In case you missed some of our events in the spring, the KSI's YouTube channel now carries our talks on K-beauty as a transpacific enterprise, Korean American history and heritage preservation, the publication of Kim San and Nym Wales' Song of Arirang, South Korea's contemporary activist social movements.

Lastly, in important news for the institute, last May the KSI was announced as a new recipient of a Core University Grant from the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS). A fruit of collaborative efforts among the institute's faculty and staff, the grant will fund several programs at the KSI during 2026-27, and it will be extendable yearly until 2030-31. We wish to express our gratitude to the AKS for their support of our institute, and we look forward to our future programming in the service of Korean studies at USC and in the wider Southern California region.

As KSI launches on a new semester full of events, we look forward to your continued participation and to your support for the institute. A heartfelt thanks is due to all who are making these programs possible. If you have any questions or ideas for future initiatives or programming, please get in touch with me at sunyoungp@usc.edu.

Best wishes,

Sunyoung Park
Director, Korean Studies Institute

Welcome and Congratulations

The Korean Studies Institute welcomes the 2025-26 cohort of the KSI Undergraduate Research Fellows and the Korea Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow Dr. Juwon Kim. We also warmly congratulate Korean language lecturer Bohyun Kim on her well-deserved promotion.

We are delighted to host three Postdoctoral Scholars at our Ahn House this year. Newly with us is Dr. Juwon Kim, Korea Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow. Her research examines the history of race, racialization and racism as a social construct in the twentieth-century South Korea and Korean diaspora. Dr. Monica Cho is continuing her affiliation with our Institute as a Visiting Scholar, and Dr. Jeongin Lee is entering her second year as Postdoctoral Fellow with the USC Society of Fellows in Humanities.



KF Postdoctoral Fellow Dr. Juwon Kim

Upcoming Events

KSI 399 Course, Korean Studies Fellows Research Seminar Wednesdays, 5 - 7:50 pm Ahn House

The weekly research seminar guides the Undergraduate Research Fellows of the USC Korean Studies Institute through the preparation of a research paper with respective disciplinary focus. The Fellows will develop their research projects and engage with primary literary and visual texts as well as critical essays drawn from multiple disciplines. The course culminates with a thesis length paper presented at the annual joint conference between USC, the University of Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania in spring of 2027. [More information here](#)

Mutual Gaze: Grassroots Encounters and the Foundations of a Living Korea-US Alliance Thursday, September 10, 10 am - 4 pm Doheny Memorial Library Room 240

The conference commemorates the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Peace Corps' first deployment to Korea in 1966 by exploring the human dimension of Korea-U.S.

relations by examining how grassroots exchanges, personal encounters, and intellectual dialogue shaped mutual understanding between the two countries. Through presentations by historians, returned Peace Corps volunteers, and public scholars, the conference

GRASSROOTS ENCOUNTERS
AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF A
LIVING KOREA-U.S. ALLIANCE

THE MUTUAL GAZE

Thursday, September 10, 2024 | 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Doheny Memorial Library, and-floor Friends Lecture Hall (room 240)
Celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Peace Corps in Korea

The US Peace Corps was first established in 1961 by President Kennedy as an exercise in American "soft power." The agency trained and deployed volunteers in countries around the world to help establish better ties among people at the grassroots level.

In 1966, under President Johnson, Peace Corps volunteers were sent to Korea for the first time. There, the American volunteers taught in rural classrooms and staffed public health centers, while befriending Korean intellectuals and influencing the country's development into a modern power.

At this event, five former Peace Corps Korea volunteers, whose service led to lifelong careers in Korean Studies, will speak about how their career paths were positively affected by their service, followed by scholarly perspectives from experts in U.S.-Korea relations.

To RSVP, visit [usc.edu](#) or scan the QR code.

Co-sponsored by the USC Korean Heritage Library, USC Korean Studies Institute, Graduate Council of the Republic of Korea in Los Angeles, and Korea National University of Education.

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Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Los Angeles

highlights the role of Peace Corps service, the development of Korean Studies, the adaptation of modernization theory in Korea, and the lasting impact of these exchanges on scholarship, culture, and cross-cultural leadership. The event is organized by the Korean Heritage Library and co-sponsored by the Korean Studies Institute, The Consulate General of Republic of Korea in Los Angeles, the Academy of Korean Studies and the Center for Modern Korean Education Studies. [RSVP Link Here](#)

K-Defense: Global Standing and Future R&D Directions

Thursday, September 24, 12 - 1:30 pm

Ahn House

Dr. Ahn Hyochun, expert in advanced defense technologies of Korea, will discuss the current state and future research trajectory of South Korea's defense industry in the age of AI and autonomous systems. The talk will be conducted in Korean. [RSVP Link Here](#)

Korean Heritage Library's 40th Anniversary Celebration

Thursday, September 25, 10 am - 12 pm

Doheny Memorial Library Room 240

Over the past four decades, the Korean Heritage Library has served the USC community of scholars, students and educators with unique collections, archival resources and digital initiatives. Through preserving and providing access to these materials, the Library has advanced research, teaching and new scholarship on Korea and Korean diaspora. The celebration honors forty years of stewardship and celebrates partnerships to further build Korean Studies and Korean American community. [RSVP Link Here.](#)

Book Talk with Translator Seulbin Han: Brother is a Street Musician - Viewing the Landscape of Modernity through Korean Popular Music by Zhang Eujeong

Wednesday, September 30, 3 - 4:20 pm

Ahn House

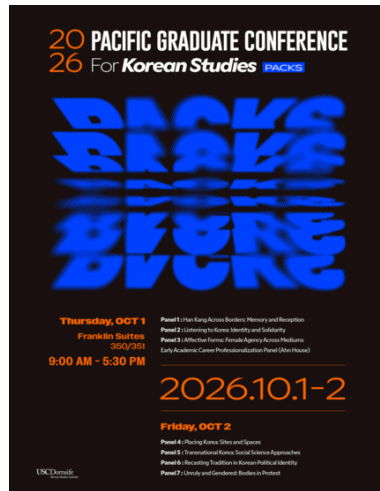
Seulbin Han (Ph.D. cand., Ohio State University) will present this foundational study of the history of Korean popular music by introducing the book's core concepts, arguments, and methods, as well as some guiding resources for this text's potential application in a variety of Korean studies courses dealing with Korean popular music, history, society and cultures. [RSVP Link Here](#)

Pacific Graduate Conference in Korean Studies at USC

Thursday, October 1 - Friday, October 2

Tutor Campus Center 350

The annual conference fosters a multidisciplinary community of local and regional graduate students whose projects significantly engage Korean society and culture across the periods. The conference is



organized by a committee of USC graduate students. The full agenda of the conference is available here - [2026 PaCKS schedule](#). Please [RSVP Here](#).

Hangul Day

Wednesday, October 7, 10:30 am - 1:30 pm

Ahn House

Hangul Day commemorates and celebrates the proclamation of Hangul, the Korean alphabet. Attendees are welcome to check out the stations for writing contest raffles, letter crafts, traditional games and snacks. The event is organized by the Korean language program and co-sponsored by the USC Libraries Korean Heritage Library.

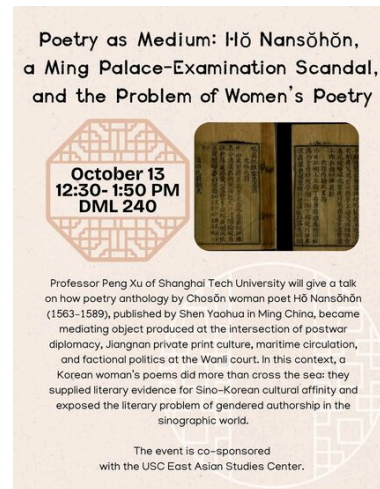
"Poetry as Medium: Hō Nansōhōn, a Ming Palace-Examination Scandal, and the Problem of Women's Poetry" Talk by Professor Peng Xu

Thursday, October 13, 12:30 - 1:50 pm

**Doheny Memorial Library
Room 240**

Professor Peng Xu of Shanghai Tech University will give a talk on how the courtesan

performance culture reshaped theatrical form, performance conditions and literary style in early modern Chinese theater. The event is co-sponsored with the USC East Asian Studies Center. [RSVP Link Here](#)



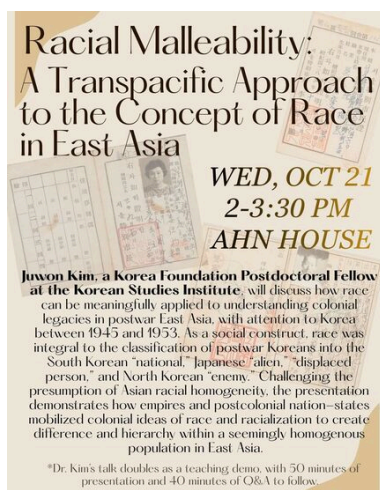
Korean and Korean American Studies Conference

Saturday, October 17, 9 am - 5 pm

Vineyard Room

The Conference gathers Korean and Korean American studies scholars as well as K-12 Korean language and contents educators. The event is co-organized by Professor Ruth Chung of the Rossier School of

Education and co-sponsored by the Consulate General of Republic of Korea in Los Angeles and the USC Libraries Korean Heritage Library.



Racial Malleability: A Transpacific Approach to the Concept of Race in East Asia

**Wednesday, October 21,
2 - 3:30 pm
Ahn House**

Juwon Kim, a Korea Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the Korean Studies Institute, will discuss how race can be meaningfully applied to understanding colonial legacies

in postwar East Asia, with attention to Korea between 1945 and 1953. This presentation examines how race can be meaningfully applied to the context of postwar East Asia, during which former colonial Koreans were repatriated-qua-(re)displaced after the Japanese defeat in 1945. *Dr. Kim's talk doubles as a teaching demo, with 50 minutes of presentation and 40 minutes of Q&A to follow. [RSVP Link Here](#)

K-Woolim Speech Competition Saturday, October 24 9 am - 12 pm Seely G. Mudd Building Room 101

K-Woolim Korean Speech Competition is open to middle school, high school and college students. Participating students will be recognized with medals, prizes, and certificates. The event is organized by the Korean Language Program at the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at USC and the Korean language teachers at the Torrance Unified School District, and co-sponsored by the USC Korean Studies Institute, Korean Education Center in Los Angeles, the International Korean Educators Network and the Korean Language Teachers Association. For more information, refer to the [Event Website](#)



K-Trail Friday, November 6, 9:30 am - 12 pm Korean Heritage Library and Ahn House



The walking tour takes the attendees to the notable spaces related to Korean heritage on USC campus and surrounding areas, starting with the USC Korean Heritage Library and ending at the Dosan Ahn Family House, home of the Korean Studies Institute. The event is co-sponsored with the USC Libraries Korean Heritage Library. [RSVP link](#)

Walking in Between: A Bae Doona Retrospective
Wednesday, February 10
through Friday, February
12, 20027
Multiple Venues on Campus



Save the Date for this Visions and Voices Event! The series of featured screenings and conversations celebrate the filmography of Bae Doona, an internationally acclaimed South Korean actress. Bae Doona along with directors Kore-eda Hirokazu and Jeong Jae-eun will be joined by leading scholars in film and media studies at USC and beyond for meaningful discussions about Korean cinema, collaborative partnerships with global auteurs, themes of transnationalism and neoliberalism in contemporary society. Major kudos to the committee of USC graduate students of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and the School of Cinematic Arts for organizing this headline event. The event is co-sponsored by the USC Libraries Korean Heritage Library and the Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture. For more information, refer to the [Event Website](#). RSVP opens on January 4!

And here are some other events that may be of interest to you...

Los Angeles Korean Film Festival
Thursday, September 24 through Saturday, September 26
Harmony Gold Preview House and Korean Cultural Center
Los Angeles

Experience the new voices and evolving landscape of Korean cinema in Los Angeles through three days of screenings, filmmaker conversations, special programs, and audience events. The opening ceremony is held on Thursday, September 24 at 7 pm, with the screening of *The World of Love* and Q&A with the Director. Here is the

[RSVP link](#). For more information about the Festival, refer to the [Event Website](#)

Radical Ahjumma x KQT Pungmul: Dictée Support Group Event

Thursday, September 24, 7 - 9 pm

Oriental Bar, Brooklyn, NY

As a 2026 Brooklyn Book Festival bookend event, this commemorative session remembers and celebrates Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's posthumously published book, *Dictée* (1982). The Dictée Support Group was created in conversation with the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive's retrospective exhibition of Cha's interdisciplinary and experimental art works. Radical Ahjumma is a collective of feminist writers from the Korean diaspora, with Margaret Juhae Lee, S. Isabel Choi, Nancy Jooyou Kim and Hannah Michell. For more information, refer to the [Event Website](#)

Book Talk on *Miss Kathi: Saving Lives in North Korea*

Friday, October 23, 8 am

Pacific Council

Pacific Council will host a book talk over breakfast, featuring Kathi Zellweger and Mike Chinoy, authors of *Miss Kathi: Saving Lives in North Korea*, a firsthand account of Ms. Zellweger's nearly three decades of humanitarian work. For more information, see the [Event Website](#)

Korean Soundscape: the Pulse of Gugak

Saturday, November 7, 6 pm

Luckman Theater, California State University, Los Angeles

The concert showcases distinguished musicians from the National Gugak Center of Korea with their signature repertoire of traditional Korean percussion with contemporary musical elements. The event is co-sponsored by the Korean Cultural Center Los Angeles.

Publication Opportunity

The Spectator, journal for film and television criticism produced by the Division of Cinema and Media Studies at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, is accepting submissions for the fall 2027 issue titled "Inconspicuously Fabulous," with a focus on dimensions of visibility, representation and expression. Essays from diverse archives and methodologies, book reviews, as well as artist contributions are welcome. For more information and questions, please contact Raymond Kyooyung Ra at kyooyung@usc.edu.

For more news and information about the USC Korean Studies Center, visit <https://dornsife.usc.edu/ksi/>

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